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RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS

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RETROSPECTIVE REVIEWS

Edmund Gosse: 'Questions at Issue.'

MR. GOSSE once quaintly told us, in his address at Horsham, on the occasion of Shelley's centenary, that he was not a man of affairs. Some of us smiled, and reading his *Questions at Issue*, one is reminded of the artless disclaimer. For over and above the many admirable and charming qualities of these essays—their urbane grace of style, their felicitous illustration, their lambent irony—one is struck by what we may term their statesmanlike reach and grasp. The phrase has an impious sound, it is truly an unholy matrimony of words; yet let us for once speak of the politics of literature, as the theme with which Mr. Gosse deals with skill and aplomb, in his new volume. Mr. Gosse has written literary history with a pen which has known the rare secret of combining the pedestrian virtues of historical presentation with the lighter airs and graces proper to literature. His 'Seventeenth Century Studies' makes a collection of literary miniatures marked by rare grace of outline and delicacy of tone. In his exposition one has always been sure of meeting the right word and the unexpected view. Besides, one has observed a skill in grouping, in dealing with complex periods, such as is not too common in the literary historian. This should

have prepared us for what I have called the statesman-like quality of the present essays; for the good historian may be expected, when he turns from the past to the present and the future—to make the good politician.

It may be superstition in me, but I always look with a certain awe upon the politician, much as I look upon those men, mighty octave-stretchers, who have the courage to span bridges and rear cathedral domes. To have to work with such stupendous generalisations would stun my faculties—or at least I think so;—of course one never knows one's possibilities! And, without comparing Mr Gosse to a Michael Angelo or a Telford, or a Gladstone, it is such generalisations with which he has the courage to deal in his *Questions at Issue*: 'The Influence of Democracy on Literature,' 'Has America Produced a Poet?' 'Is Verse in Danger?' 'Tennyson—and after,' and such questions—so to say, the great international questions of literature.

The moment I try, imaginatively, to look at the democracy, my head grows dizzy with bewilderment; it seems to me as unthinkable as a Supreme Being. I know as little of its tides and currents as of those in the midmost ocean. But Mr. Gosse faces it manfully, with all the courage of his generalisations. He realises that, for the literary man, the one thing is not to be afraid of it, but rather to confidently assume its reins. It is, he would seem to imply, a powerful, but slow-moving, unwieldy leviathan which it only needs address and pluck to drive. Like every other beast the democracy may be controlled by the firm human eye. To quail before it, to relax one jot of its immemorial authority,

to abate one tittle of its immemorial distinction, would be fatal to literature. Literature must ever exist by means of an aristocracy, but Mr. Gosse is himself democratic enough to observe that it is an aristocracy which is more and more being recruited from the ranks of the democracy. He points to the unmistakable witness to the increased interest in literature afforded by the space of late given to literary matters, first in one or two of the evening papers, and more recently by the morning papers. Sale, not sentiment, is, one may assume, the influential motive with newspaper editors, and they would hardly print so many pages of reviews, interviews, and gossip did it not pay them to do so. On the whole, Mr. Gosse takes an encouraging view of the probable influence of democracy on literature. 'Let no man needlessly dishearten his brethren in this world of disillusions,' he says, 'by losing faith in the ultimate survival and continuance of literature.'

On that tremulous question, 'Is Verse in Danger?' Mr. Gosse is also consolatory, though as the essay was written in 1891, he was unable to note the very encouraging renaissance of interest in verse which was the chief literary portent of 1892, an interest which had arisen independently of the death of Tennyson, but which was powerfully quickened by that event. On the other hand, there is undoubtedly a widespread distaste for verse, unfortunately nurtured by the prosaic system of board school education. Doubtless, as one of them suggests, the fact that so many of our modern poets have made 'a toy of song'—'till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme'—divorcing

themselves from the full-blooded interests of humanity, has much to do with this alienation of readers. However, our poets are once more tuning their lyres to manlier rhythms, and, whatever befall, though 'the Muse herself, that Orpheus bore,' should seem for a time to lie slain of Demos, she would in reality but sleep, for the passion for song, Mr. Gosse reminds us, is one of those organic instincts eternally young in the heart of man.

Coventry Patmore: 'Religio Poetæ.'

WHEN extremes meet it is often good for both of them. Unfortunately the meeting is harder to bring about than the proverb implies. For example, I cannot imagine anything more salutary for the socialistic, scientific, vegetarian, and teetotal product of 'the new culture,' than that he should meet Mr. Patmore in his volume of essays entitled *Religio Poetæ*, but I am afraid that such a book is the very last to fall into his hands. Probably he has heard of Mr. Patmore as a sort of Tory Cassandra, an extremely bitter, superior person of the very oldest school, a Catholic mystic, who, had he the power, would be only too glad to play Torquemada to the democratic heresy. It is true that Mr. Patmore is all this, but it does not follow that he may not have something very valuable to say for all that. If he hates and detests modern developments, it is because he sees that, whatever its faults, the old order developed certain excellences which the new order is in danger of sweeping

away, and for which it does not seem likely at present to give us any worthy substitute. Mr. Patmore is enamoured of what Lord de Tabley finely calls 'the old perfections of the earth,' and it is these that he, somewhat too acrimoniously, preaches to an age which, in its eagerness for the shadow, is perhaps in danger of losing the substance. Mr. Patmore has, too, that historic vision mercifully hidden from many enthusiasts of the new spirit. He realises with Sir Thomas Browne that 'the great mutations of the world are acted,' that what has been will be, that the world does not so much progress towards new states as revolve through a given series of old ones, that, as in sailing round the globe, you have only to push on far enough into the future to again encounter the past; that ages of faith and ages of despair, ages of aristocracy and ages of democracy, succeed each other in regular succession, like beat of systole and diastole, and that there is nothing new under the sun.

It would hardly do if every one took this fatalistic view of things, but it is a view that our hurry-scurry, over-anxious age may well contemplate. It may be allowed to tranquillise, without putting to sleep, our over-troubled spirits, so preoccupied with our duties towards to-morrow. The greater dignity, the truer peace, the fuller, more 'attentive' experience of the life of our fathers—these, at least, we are losing to-day, whatever is to be given us in exchange: and while we are so hurried to abolish old institutions and ideals we forget that many of them, however worn out as symbols, stand for instincts eternal in the heart of man. However we endeavour to level down distinctions, in course of nature

they will re-assert themselves. We shall but return to them under new names. Among these instincts is religion, and the various formulæ of the Catholic Church stand for spiritual states and experience which will always be facts of actual apprehension for certain natures. 'A S. Catherine of Genoa and a S. John of the Cross know each what the other is saying, though, to a Huxley or a Morley, it is but a hooting of owls.' There were saints and mystics before the Christian era, and there will be saints and mystics after it.

In practice the Catholic Church has always accepted the facts of human nature, as the Protestant Church has never done. No church is so Calvinistic in its acceptance of natural and impassable conditions. It never, like Protestantism, believes in the possibility of silk purses from sows' ears. 'There are as many degrees of human capacity for holiness as for any other kind of eminence, and for most men a very moderate degree of spirituality is the utmost for which they are entitled to hope.' However it may counsel perfection, Catholicism in practice takes imperfection for granted. It was before science in the recognition of the boundaries set to will and development by individual constitution; and although such an attitude has its obvious dangers, is often, in fact, tantamount to no religion at all, yet we see in Mr. Patmore's essays the advantages which also follow from it, in their logical consistency, and that power to convince which comes of nothing so much as a regard for the facts, rather than the fancies, of human nature.

Not, of course, that one for a moment accepts Mr.

Patmore's version of human life as a whole. Whose version, indeed, would we thus accept? What I mean to say is, that the view is instructive, that the democratic ideal has, after all, something to learn from the aristocratic, and in what direction Mr. Patmore's essays largely illustrate. Unfortunately they no less abundantly illustrate the dangers to which that view is liable, by a display of the exclusive supercilious spirit which too often marks the caste of Vere de Vere. If we made ourselves, there would be some meaning in such pride of breeding; but seeing, as Mr. Frith said, that it is a mere toss-up whether we are born painters, poets, or auctioneers, why should the man who has gained by the toss look down on him who has lost by it?

Merely as prose Mr. Patmore's essays stand very high. The section of the volume dealing with artistic considerations is especially sound and suggestive. Mr. Patmore says that Mrs Meynell alone of modern prose writers is always distinguished. One may think the limit a little rigorous if only for the fact that it leaves no room for Mr. Patmore himself, for, indeed, his writing has not only distinction, but also an ease which so rarely accompanies distinction to-day, though there are signs that the reaction against our recent self-consciousness is on the way.

George Moore: 'Modern Painting.'

VERY far from self-conscious—in fact, how completely spontaneous and vivid, is the critical writing of Mr. George Moore! I have just been energising myself by, so to say, taking electric baths in his volume of essays on 'Modern Painting.' It would be presumptuous, and, in fact, impossible, for me to offer Mr. Moore that learned artistic appreciation with which alone he can be satisfied. Certain pictures I feel to be great move me, but I know nothing of that technique which has assumed so vast an importance in art criticism to-day—nothing of composition, brushwork values, or texture, not even to name more recondite artistic mysteries. But I do think I know good writing when I see it, and I can at least offer Mr. Moore the tribute of my honest envy for his forcible and flexible prose. In acknowledging permission to reprint his *Speaker* papers, Mr. Moore makes a new departure for which all who shall hereafter reprint essays owe him thanks. It is a very proper inversion of the usual method by which the writer seems to imply that the magazine or newspaper was his first care and his book an afterthought, an implication which at once gives the critic the opportunity of affixing the hackneyed stigma, that the papers in question were doubtless very well in their way as contributions to periodical literature, but, etc., etc. Which raises the question why the novel should alone be allowed the privilege of serial publication. Lamb's and Hazlitt's best essays all did duty first in magazines. But here is Mr. Moore's note. 'The editor

of the *Speaker*,' he says, 'allowed me to publish from time to time chapters of a book on art. These chapters have been gathered from the mass of art journalism which had grown about them, and I reprint them in the sequence originally intended.' That is the way to talk.

It reminds me of a similarly defiant preface to Mr. Ernest Radford's characteristic volume of poems: 'Many of these pieces have appeared in magazines to whose editors, with the rarest exceptions, I am under no obligation. . . . Some are here because, to my thinking, I have been able to improve them; and others — because I have not. All is vanity, as the Preacher saith.'

Henry James: 'Essays in London, etc.'

MR. HENRY JAMES has done so much to delight us, given us so many fascinating books, that it may seem a little unkind to suggest that he is suffering from anæmia. Yet such, it is to be feared, is the truth. It was certainly never his *métier* to be full-blooded, but the ruddy corpuscles in his writing grow fewer and farther between. His writing begins to illustrate the vanishing-point between mind and matter. It already belongs rather to microscopy than literature. Yet—to use a more homely image—for those who don't mind waiting for the currants in their cakes, his *Essays in London and Elsewhere* are worth while. I like best his essays on Flaubert, Loti, and the brothers de Goncourt. They remind one of those charming studies

of French poets and novelists that for some of us were our first introductions to certain fascinating figures. But even in these, by comparison with those earlier essays, there are too plentiful marks of anæmia. To use Mr. James's own word, they are quite painfully 'alembicated.' One would have thought that self-consciousness should grow less as the writer attains mastery over his medium were there not modern instances, such as Flaubert, to witness the contrary. Mr. James grows more and more a martyr to 'style.' He has become a literary contortionist of the most painful kind, and to watch him straining and twisting to put commonplace thought into unnatural English recalls the self-torture of an Indian fakir. No doubt his writing is full of subtle observation, but it is too often of trivial *nuances* that belong less to his subject than to his somewhat dandified way of looking at it. It seems often little more than that flippant criticism of the accidental lights and shades on the surface of life which passes for 'brilliant' talk in drawing-rooms. But it goes without saying that Mr. James drops many a pregnant phrase for all that, as when he describes Browning as 'a poet without a lyre'; and, if his style is a little too punctiliously West End in its cut, at least he pays the reader the compliment of dressing, which too few modern writers ever think of doing. If he could only infuse into his style that 'ruddy drop of blood' Mr. Dobson sings of! Would it not be wise to leave writing for a time, till the reservoirs of his spirit grow full again?

But I must not forget to thank Mr. James for his charming appreciation of London. It consoles one for

Mr. Grant Allen's blasphemies on the subject. In celebrating his mistress, Mr. James almost forgets himself so far as to be spontaneous, as where, delighting in the *rus in urbe* surprises of London, he says: 'It takes London to put you in the way of a purely rustic walk from Notting Hill to Whitehall. You may traverse this immense distance—a most comprehensive diagonal—altogether on soft, fine turf, amid the song of birds, the bleat of lambs, the ripple of ponds, the rustle of admirable trees.' *Admirable* trees! And then he proceeds to personally conduct the reader on the charming excursion, till we arrive where 'the Foreign Office, as you see it from the bridge, often looks romantic, and the sheet of water it overhangs, poetic—suggests an Indian palace bathing its feet in the Ganges.'

'Daphnis and Chloe': Thornley's Translation.

WE speak of *Romeo and Juliet* as the ideal expression of dawning love, but, fresh and dewy as it is, it is not the first most magic hour of love's dawn that it expresses. Romeo at least had already had some experience of 'the way of a man with a maid' before he loved his Juliet, and Juliet's frank, eager passion was certainly not entirely without knowledge. She has at least heard enough of men to insist

> 'If that thy bent of love be honourable,
> Thy purpose marriage,'

whereas poor Chloe knew none of these things. She

only knew that the presence of Daphnis filled her with tumultuous ecstasies she was at a loss to understand, strange yearnings she had no conception how to satisfy. Nor was Daphnis any wiser. They bathe each other in the crystal springs, with the most absolute innocence of intention, but with the most exquisite trouble of unknown joy. Chloe touches his white skin furtively, as a child might touch an electric button, with this difference, that the sweet chimes are set going, not afar, but in herself. How soft it is! And then she touches her own to see if it be as soft. When they kiss each other it is to stop still with wonder, like a child listening to the ticking of a watch. What does it mean?

'Whither,' exclaimed Daphnis, 'in the name of the Nymphs, will that kisse of Chloe drive me? Her lips are softer than Roses and sweeter than the honeycombs of the Launs and Meadowes; but her kisse stings like a Bee. I have often kist the young kids; I have kist a pretty whippet, the whelp of Melampo; and that Calf which Dorco gave me; but this kisse is a new thing. My heart leaps up to my lips, my spirit sparckles, and my soul melts; Oh what a mischievous Victory is this! Oh what a disease, whose name I know not! Did Chloe take poyson before she kist me? How then is she not dead? How sweetly sing the Nightingales, while my pipe hangs on yonder pine! How wantonly the kids skip, and I lie still upon the ground! How sweetly do the flowers grow, and I neglect to make garlands! So it is the Violet, Hyacinth, and the Cowslips flourish; but alas, Daphnis, Daphnis withers!'

What is to be done? Where is the fountain that

shall slake this consuming, celestial thirst? The search for that is the theme of this 'most sweet and pleasant pastoral romance'—'for young ladies'! How the lovers eventually find it I must leave the reader to discover for himself. He will encounter much honeyed writing on the way, words 'sweeter than wild honey dripping down,' many naïve situations, perils and partings, and the ecstasy of love's meeting. If his idea of innocence and innocent writing means ignorance, and an ignoring of certain verities of existence rather than their reverent presentation, he will, doubtless, encounter shocks to his modesty; for *Daphnis and Chloe*, like most innocent things, is not meant for the drawing-room table. Drawing-room readers are far too prurient to breathe upon its chaste, miraculous page. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has draped its pure nakedness for such readers in that inexpressible dilution of moonlight, *Paul and Virginia*—for the latter is usually regarded as a Bowdlerised version of the perfect work of Longus. Save that the theme in each case is first love, there seems little resemblance between the two stories. The radical distinction is revealed in the manner of Virginia's death. The reader will remember that it was by shipwreck, in sight of the very shore from which Paul was dashing himself to save her. Actually, she had been offered the opportunity of escape by a sailor, who, as he left the ship, begged her to throw off her clothes and take to the water with him. But Virginia preferred death to 'immodesty'! She left her lover and her mother to die of anguish rather than risk her blushes—though I must say that Paul and the mother, being no less prigs,

seem to have rather rejoiced in her martyrdom to 'chastity.' How differently would Chloe's innocence have manifested itself! There is no real innocence without nakedness. Clothes imply initiation. Therein is indeed the vital distinction between the two idylls, after which surface resemblances are of no account.

Of course, *Daphnis and Chloe* was no more the product of an age of innocence than *Paul and Virginia.* Rather is it the effort of a decadent age to project itself into its lost paradise of purity and simplicity. The unsavoury episode of Gnatho and Daphnis near the close reminds us that it belongs to later Greek art. It and the *Hero and Leander* of Musæus were, indeed, as Mr. Jacobs has remarked, 'the swan songs of Greek genius, each with all the pure force of Greek art, and yet infused with the spirit of romantic love so characteristic of the modern temper.' The undercurrent of humour which laughs through it marks it also as the self-conscious retrospect of an age in itself far from innocent. Of its author, Longus himself, practically nothing is known. Some critics say that he lived during the fourth century, probably in the reign of Theodosius the Great; others that he was as late as the fifth century.

Daphnis and Chloe has, indeed, come to be regarded less as a Greek than a French classic, from the fact that it was first given to the world through the charming translation of Jacques Amyot in 1559. An English translation of Amyot's version by Angell Day had even appeared (1587) before the Greek text was first published in 1589. The name of another Frenchman is no less bound up with the story of *Daphnis and Chloe*—that of

Paul Louis Courier. Up to his famous discovery in 1807 there had existed a considerable hiatus in the text. It still exists in the present reprint, George Thornley's translation being dated 1657. It occurs on page 2 (though no mention is made of it) between the passage where Daphnis, having been dirtied by the soil from his fall into the wolf-trap, bathes himself in the cave of the nymphs, Chloe, sisterly, holding his raiment, and the next passage, quoted above, in which he bewails the necromantic power of Chloe's lips. One fortunate day in the Biblioteca Laurentiana, in Florence, Courier was lucky enough to discover the missing passage, of some length, which he thereupon transcribed. His transcription completed, he either accidentally, or accidentally on purpose (as say his critics), spilled a bottle of ink over the original passage, so thoroughly obscuring it that his copy became at once the only authority for his discovery. No fiercer literary controversy has raged than that which followed 'sur une tache d'encre dans une copie de Longus.' Nowadays critics seem pretty well to have made up their minds that Courier's accident was on purpose. Goethe, a passionate admirer of *Daphnis and Chloe*, was of that opinion. Courier's accuracy of transcription, from fragments that remained unsubmerged by the ink, was impugned, but the general authenticity of his discovery has not been seriously doubted. If, as seems unlikely, Courier invented the entire passage, the reader is none the less his debtor, for he has certainly caught the spirit of the original so well that his fragment now makes quite one of the most charming passages in the book.

In addition to the translations of Day and Thornley, already referred to, there have been three other translations of *Daphnis and Chloe* into English, by Craggs in 1719, by Le Grice (the 'C. V. Le G.' of Lamb's Christ's Hospital days) 1804; and an anonymous one issued in Bohn's Library, 1855. Of all, however, that by Thornley has always been considered the most spirited, as it is certainly the most 'robust.' Thornley's English is not at all euphuistic like Day's; on the contrary, it is marked by a homely virility very striking, yet it is rich in quaint beauty of phrase and picturesque idiom—as, for example, where we read that the lambs come skipping to their dams 'to riggle and nussle at their dugs.' It is hardly possible to imagine a more charming edition of the fragrant old pastoral than this, for which Mr. Ricketts has designed some of his most beautiful designs—closely following the highly conventional manner of the early Italian illustrators. Certainly his is a wonderful magic which makes an old style so vividly blossom anew, as if it were born to-day for the first time.

William Tirebuck: 'Dorrie,' etc.

WHILE every one was doing extravagant homage to 'Tess' there was a certain minority of readers with the courage of their opinions which recognised in Mr. Tirebuck's 'Dorrie' a heroine of no less charm and of even greater humanity. Tess had the advantage over her

Lancashire sister, that to her were suddenly paid all the arrears of fame long due to Mr. Hardy from a capricious public. Besides, she had the full benefit of a delightful environment. She brought with her the fragrance of apple orchards, she had all the traditional charm of the country beauty; whereas Dorrie, though as genuine a nymph as ever haunted the countryside, was condemned to be the queen of a Liverpool slum. Yet, as I said, she did not fail to win a wider court. Mr. Lang was one of her very earliest adorers. 'She seems to myself,' ran the declaration of his passion, 'the most absolutely original, and, in her way, the most taking figure in recent fiction. She is unique. To one reader at least she remains among the friends of fiction, the beloved of dreams.' Evidently Dorrie succeeded in finding that soft corner of Mr. Lang's heart which he keeps for those fortunate young writers who can find it.

But Dorrie's success was somewhat marred by the over-elaboration of her portrait. An undue conscientiousness of detail led Mr. Tirebuck to forget proportion, and to overweight his book with an overplus of incident and characterisation, always, however, excellent in itself. No recent writer has imparted such an absolute concreteness to his *dramatis personæ*. When he learns to combine this realism with a sense of what is of the first and of the second importance, to distinguish between the relative value of foreground and background—and it need not take long to learn,—Mr. Tirebuck will make a great artistic advance. In *Sweetheart Gwen, a Welsh Idyll*, he has curiously enough

gone to the other extreme. Though in the course of the story bits of detail stand out vividly from the dreamy twilight in which the characters move, Mr. Tirebuck's method, compared with that in *Dorrie*, is a somewhat vague impressionism. His next course seems to be to combine both methods, to strike the mean between pre-Raphaelitism and impressionism. But though the atmosphere of *Sweetheart Gwen* is twilight, it is the twilight of dreamland, the dreamland of memory, the lost paradise of youth. Among the angelic ghosts that wander through that lost paradise, who does not count a boy-love, half-sweetheart, half-mother, probably twenty-eight to his twelve, to whom he aspired in hopeless boyish worship, a figure which in later years becomes more impersonal, less nameable by any earthly surname, but more and more 'the angel which is the type of all women.' Sweetheart Gwen was such an apocalypse of the wonder of woman to the soul of Mark. She swam into his five-year-old life at a Welsh farmhouse, where he had been taken to pay a visit. How they first met, how their odd courtship proceeded, and how at length Sweetheart Gwen faded away into the paradise of memory, Mr. Tirebuck is best left to tell for himself. Apart from the charm of his main motive, he has given us with considerable skill a picture of Welsh farm-life, very fresh and real, and the breath of its healthy rusticity pervades the book from end to end, like the smell of hay. Yet compared with *Dorrie*, *Sweetheart Gwen* is a mere sketch, a novelette. It somewhat teases the appetite for Mr. Tirebuck's work which *Dorrie* awoke in us, and leaves us impatient for

his next book. Over that, however, I hope he will not hurry. His gift strikes me as one that is not to be forced, but which operates best in quiet, deliberate, day-by-day endeavour.

Robert Herrick: His Editors.

IT is always a matter of amused speculation, when one takes up a new edition of a writer who has been 'definitely' edited several times already, by what ingenuity of arrangement, luck of discovery, or industry of collation, the new editor will fulfil the necessary condition of 'going one better' than his predecessors. Again and again we have had our beloved authors edited, as the actors say, for 'positively' the last time. Here, we have been assured over and over again, is the 'definitive' edition. But, indeed, each generation would seem to need new editions of those authors who, as their vogue is not limited to a generation or two, are known as classics. And the necessity for this we can very well understand when we read eighteenth-century prefaces, say, to Chaucer or Spenser, or any of those 'barbaric,' 'antiquated' poets, towards whose inelegancies and unfashionableness the eighteenth-century critic was always so patronising and so apologetic to his more elegant readers. The poetry indeed changes not with its editors, except microscopically in regard to variorum readings, to which I fancy the lover of poetry pays little heed. Yet, it

is undeniable that the juxtaposition of some dull fellow of an editor, manifestly without a particle of that affinity with his poet which it is natural to look for—else why should he be drawn to edit him?—is a distressing, and indeed an insufferable accident. We are for ever conscious that we are reading the poet in the presence of an unsympathetic third person, all the more tiresome in that he bores us with his wrongheaded attempts at appreciation. I know a pretty little edition of the *Religio Medici* which has been quite spoiled for me by the astounding remark of its editor upon Browne's beautiful description of his life as 'a miracle of thirty years'—'yet its actual incidents justify no such description'!

Then there are editions of poets one likes better than others, quite irrationally, and in defiance of the fact that their texts are the scoff of modern scientific editors. For example, I always like a Chaucer that contains 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,' though such a preference could seem hardly less than immoral to members of the Early English Text Society. Dr. Grosart is an editor of whom young squibs of editors, who have learnt the greater part of what they know from his editions, are fond of saying unkind things. Undeniably he has his faults. His methods are often cumbrous and uncouth, his style is sometimes grotesquely elephantine; but what an evident gusto pervades all his editorial work, what a pure love for letters it must have been which has animated so vast an energy of appreciation! His editions have individuality, and that is just what more faultless editions lack. 'Quia multum amavit' is, after all, the best

recommendation to mercy at the bar of time; and perhaps Dr. Grosart has loved even too well. At any rate his edition of Herrick will always be Herrick to me, though the length of its 'memorial introduction' is indeed enormous, and its facilities of reference have been surpassed by Mr. Pollard, in his simple device of numbering the poems consecutively. Mr. Saintsbury in his new Aldine edition has adopted this plan, and further improved upon it by making the consecutiveness include the 'Noble Numbers'—which in Mr. Pollard's edition were numbered separately. But Mr. Saintsbury does not pretend to surpass his forerunners in any essential matters. His text, like the texts of Messrs. Grosart and Pollard, has been collated with the first edition. That done there is little left to do with the text of Herrick. A few questions of apocryphal poems, and variorum versions of those admittedly his, arise, but they are of no importance, the more so as (and this is Mr. Saintsbury's view) the variants are but first drafts, ultimately discarded by the poet when he came to print. On these matters, of course, Mr. Saintsbury has his say. But the distinction of his Aldine edition is that while its text is at least as good as those of its predecessors, its introduction by Mr. Saintsbury is the best that has appeared before any edition. Herrick's was a large inclusive nature. So is Mr. Saintsbury's. A teetotaler, however admirable in other ways, is not the fit person to edit Burns. The same applies to Herrick. Always hoping that it is possible to be devout and a respectable member of society without being a Puritan, it is equally no use to set a Puritan to edit Herrick. Doubtless he seemed

a very Antichrist to the Rev. Mr. Syms, who succeeded him as Roundhead pastor at Dean Prior, his Devonshire incumbency: he was fond of sack and fond of kisses —though, after the fashion of poets, he probably indulged in both far more in his books than in his daily life; and it might be held that he would make all the better 'vicker' for these human failings. There is nothing makes us better sympathisers with poor humanity than a failing or two of our own. I am not venturing to attribute, 'human failings' to Mr. Saintsbury, though he makes no secret of his belief that the good things of this life were never made for fools. I only intend to say that his is that large inclusiveness of temperament and experience which fits a man, more than learning or any other gifts or accomplishments, for the appreciation of such writers as Herrick or Fielding —for, wide apart as the work of these two men may seem, their bulky frames and great British faces speak of an immense humanity in common, a humanity which is often found behind, is perhaps as necessary to, the intaglio as the fresco. Mr. Saintsbury thinks more, and it seems to me rightly, of the 'Noble Numbers' than previous editors, and he claims that Herrick's range is much wider than is usually admitted. He makes several true characterisations of his temperament—that of 'a common enjoyee,' one who instinctively lives in the joyous present—and he has this luminous passage on the meeting of extremes, which is the great surprise of Herrick's style: 'This style has some of the most singular combinations of quality that can be found anywhere. It is prim and it is easy; it is intensely

charged with classical reminiscence and even classical quotation, and it is as racy of the soil of England as any style of any English poet; it is extremely artificial, and it has a dewy freshness not easy to parallel elsewhere.' He has none of those difficulties which beset the narrow nature in reconciling the apparent contradiction between Herrick's most delicate lyrics, or his 'Noble Numbers,' and his stupidly dirty epigrams. Man, and especially Man the Poet, is a creature of many moods and incalculable possibilities. Like Villon or Verlaine, he writes hymns to the Madonna, and lives the life of an unmentionable outcast, and *vice versa*. 'Such ups and downs have poets.' Most criticism of poets proceeds on the assumption that the head of gold is the whole of the poet. When he shows his feet of clay the critic turns in disgust, or throws over them a discreet veil. Mr. Saintsbury is too much of a humanist to feel the necessity of doing this, and so to him, as to all men with any experience of life, the whole of Herrick is not comprehensible without every one of his parts. Mortimer Collins, a poet ungratefully forgotten, has two light-hearted verses on our poet which well express the two sides of him, human and divine, and as the reader can but be glad to read them, here they are:

'Rare old Herrick, the Cavalier Vicar
Of pleasant Dean Prior by Totnes Town—
Rather too wont in foaming liquor
The cares of those troublous time to drown—
Of wicked wit by no means chary—
Of ruddy lips not at all afraid;
If you gave him milk in a Devonshire dairy,
He 'd probably kiss the dairymaid.

None ever touched with so fine a finger
The delicate lyre of English rhyme;
He loved amid fresh flowers to linger
And he made their fragrance last through time;
And the daffodil growing in Spring's soft track
Has a beauty mystic and esoteric,
Since its brief, bright life, two centuries back,
Was made into verse by our Devonshire Herrick.'

'We do not hesitate to pronounce him the very best of English lyric poets,' said a writer in that charming cemetery *The Retrospective Review*, so far back as 1822; and surely he was not far wrong.

Francis Thompson: 'Poems.'

THE fine frenzy, and the fine line: these are two root characteristics of Mr. Thompson's really remarkable poems which meet us on the very threshold of his volume. The fine frenzy, too, is becoming rare in recent poetry, if it is not already extinct. Our poets grow sober and self-conscious. They seem to have taken the pledge against the strong waters of Hippocrene, and they never allow any emotion to carry them off their feet. Mr. Thompson, however, is entirely possessed with the old-fashioned 'divine afflatus.' One has seldom seen a poet more wildly abandoned to his rapture, more absorbed in the trance of his ecstasy. When the irresistible moment comes, he throws himself upon his mood as a glad swimmer gives himself to the waves, careless whither the strong tide carries him, knowing

only the wild joy of the laughing waters and the rainbow spray. He shouts, as it were, for mere gladness, in the welter of wonderful words, and he dives swift and fearless to fetch his deep-sea fancies. Again, we find him, like some venturesome lark, caught up in a lyric rapture to the very brink of the sky. Courageous little rival of the morning star! When weak men venture on these vagaries they drown or topple down the sky; but Mr. Thompson is a strong swimmer and a sure flyer. His very daring, as in all such feats, pulls him through, and hyperboles which in other hands had seemed merely absurd, in his delight us as examples of that 'fine excess' which is one of the most enthralling of the many enchantments of poetry. Intoxication as a Bacchante's, the love of words for their own sake, the willingness to whirl off with them to any orgies of fancy they may suggest, a striking vocabulary of strange out-of-the-way words (long, curious, serpent-spotted Latinisms, or racy 'gipsies of speech' from country lanes), a great command of impressive rhythm and rich colour, an Oriental exuberance and extravagance of imagery, directed by a profound Catholic mysticism, and over all an irresistible glamour of melody: these are some of the qualities which go to compose these strangely beautiful poems. One thinks of Solomon's Song and Crashaw as one reads. Indeed, Mr. Thompson must simply be Crashaw born again, but born greater. Though the conception, for example, of 'The Hound of Heaven'—a mystical song of the sinner fleeing from the love of Christ—is exactly in Crashaw's vein, yet it was not in his power to have suggested such tremendous speed

and terror of flight as whirls through every line of Mr. Thompson's poem. Space allows me to quote but a few of the opening lines:

'I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed, after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me." . . .
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their changèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn: Be sudden—to eve: Be soon;
With thy young skyey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover! . . .
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.'

We find Mr. Thompson in another mood in his charming 'Dream-Tryst':

'The breaths of kissing night and day
Were mingled in the eastern heaven:

Throbbing with unheard melody
Shook Lyra all its star-chord seven:
When dusk shrunk cold, and light trod shy,
And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey;
And souls went palely up the sky,
And mine to Lucidé.

The reader will notice the loveliness of atmospheric description in this verse, especially in the fifth line. Mr. Thompson is especially happy in rendering such effects. Here, for example, is his solemnly beautiful picture of an autumn sundown:

'Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
All nature sacerdotal seems, and thou.
The calm hour strikes on yon golden gong,
In tones of floating and mellow light
A spreading summons to evensong:
See how there
The cowlèd night
Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
What is this feel of incense everywhere?
Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,
Upwafted by the solemn thurifer,
The mighty spirit unknown,
That swingeth the slow earth before the embannered
Throne?'

The reader will note the tremendous audacity of imagery in the last impressive line. Mr. Thompson, I have hinted, is one of those poets who give us the fine line, the fine passage, rather than the carefully-built whole. Not that his poems are not artistic wholes. One might compare them to stretches of meadow sprinkled thick with flowers. It makes little difference where the fence comes. Though the general effect delights us, we are mainly busied in gathering the

flowers. That I may not leave Mr. Thompson's poems with too depressing a sense of having done them little justice, let me gather a few of these flowers, a handful of the fine lines and fancies lying everywhere about :

'The water-wraith that cries
From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured eyes
Entwines and draws me down their soundless intricacies!'

'Whose form is as a grove
Hushed with the cooing of an unseen dove;
Whose spirit to my touch thrills purer far
Than is the tingling of a silver bell;
Whose body other ladies well might bear
As soul.'

'The violet would thy dusk hair deck
With graces like thine own unsought.
Ah! but such place would daze and wreck
Its simple, lowly rustic thought.'

'Deep in my heart subsides the infrequent word,
And there dies slowly, throbbing like a wounded bird.'

'God laid His fingers on the ivories
Of her pure members as on smoothèd keys,
And there out-breathed her spirit's harmonies.'

'Hers is the face whence all should copied be,
Did God make replicas of such as she.'

'To lie as in an oubliette of God.'

'Where our last kiss still warms the air.'

Perhaps there are few who love poetry well enough to appraise such poetry as this at its full value. Poetry so unalloyed never attains a wide appreciation. Most readers like some admixture of the didactic, or the

purely intellectual, in their poetry. Poetry for its own beautiful sake sounds a little wicked or frivolous to those who have not yet conceived 'mere beauty' as the highest form of spiritual doctrine, the more impressive because inarticulate. However, with the few to whom such quintessential poetry as this appeals, Mr. Thompson's poems are safe. They are perhaps not the greatest, but they are the most fascinating poems that have appeared since Rossetti.

Frederick Greenwood: 'The Lover's Lexicon.'

'IT is,' we know, 'as easy to count atomies as to resolve the propositions of a lover'—yet this Gargantuan task Mr. Greenwood has the courage to essay. Rosalind, in the innocence of her heart, thought, and not without reason, that she knew something about love. M. Bourget, in the absence of his heart, and in the pride of something which he would fondly call experience, and which, at any rate, is certainly not innocence, fancies himself a love-doctor too. While Rosalind reckoned to know the outward and visible signs of a lover, M. Bourget and such modern 'psychologues' claim to know all his inward but unspiritual anatomy. Shakespeare and Bourget may indeed be taken as the two extremes of love's philosophy. No one who knows anything of Mr. Greenwood's blithe and manly spirit needs be told in whose school he sits. In the article on 'Love' to which the consultant of this lexicon

first turns in search of the keynote, Mr. Greenwood writes:

'There are only two distinct views of it—the poet's and the physiologist's; and the poet's is the right and pleasant view, the physiologist's grubbing, muddy, and as different from the truth as earth from the flower that grows out of it. There is a spiritual or spiritualist account of the passion which tallies with the physiologist's without being so smugly base. . . . The simple and the wise give no heed to these painful unnecessary underground grubbings; taking love for what it is in leaf and flower, the delight it yields in flower and leaf, the wholesome perfume it dispreads in every chamber of the mind, and the store of good it hoards there.'

Mr. Greenwood's view, of course, is the eternal view of the poets. The poets, it is true, have sung love in many different fashions. Many have spiritualised it out of all its earth-born sweetness, some—but very few, and of quite recent date, poets who would seem to hold fealty to Moloch rather than to Apollo—have degraded it to the foul mire of their own thoughts, a mire which is by no means to be mistaken with that 'good gross earth' which Mr. Meredith, in a fine and famous passage, has declared to be the proper, nay the only, soil of love. For the most part, however, whether the poets regard love as an angel come down to earth, or an earth-grown tree whose topmost branches catch the radiance of heaven, they are agreed in regarding it, in greater or lesser degree, as supernal in its nature. Two possessions are necessary to any profitable philosopher of love—a pure heart and common-sense. Mr. Greenwood has these gifts and many more. He is evidently a true lover himself, which is, of course, the first requisite of all. No secret society is so impenetrable

by the unbeliever as what James Thomson called the open secret society of lovers. It is quite certain that no one can know anything about love who is not, or has not been, a lover. Hence the cynicism of the non-lover is but folly and feeding the wind. It is so much irrelevant chatter, and worries no one who has been admitted to the arcana of love's so simple, yet so profound, mysteries. Mr. Greenwood adds to many great and gracious qualities of heart and mind the gift which, following himself, we may term literary 'loveliness.' In the bulk his writing is apt sometimes to be cumbrous, and the form of his present undertaking encourages a mock-pedantic seriousness of manner which is apt to grow tiresome; his prose lacks movement and sparkle; but, whatever its good or less good qualities may be, it has the quality of kindling into fine passages—a quality rare to-day, when prose-men seem to prefer a uniform excellence of the second order to an occasional excellence of the first. Mr. Greenwood's pages often blossom into great literary beauty, but over them all is the light of that 'loveliness' which comes of humanity—a distinction which we shall do well to let him draw for us in a passage that is, at the same time, one of the most characteristic of his book:

'It is not only possible, it is common to be beautiful on an exchequer empty of goodness, contentment, love received, love bestowed, or anything that can be truly called life; whereas loveliness includes all these things in the nature of it. Beauty goes in fear, loveliness in none. A breath may destroy the one at its fullest and brightest; when there is dross beneath it will come through; and there is nothing in a beautiful face, any more than in a beautiful flower, to slacken Time's effacing fingers or retard them. Lovely looks will alter too, but not so much and not so soon. For there is no dross beneath, or only as much as

there should be for alloy; and all the needed equipment of the lovely nature within—itself everlasting—is a pair of eyes to look out from clearly, and a mouth that speaks for it at all times, even when the lips are silent. There is no holiness of beauty, but there is a beauty of holiness, and (bringing that last word down within the limitations of human nature) the name of it is Loveliness.'

Mr. Greenwood admirably illustrates the distinction by adding, 'It is better to be a book like *Cranford* than a book like *Vanity Fair*.'

The reader may gather from this passage Mr. Greenwood's position in relation to other branches of his great subject. On all the vital matters he is reassuringly 'old-fashioned,' but in a convincingly new-fashioned way. He convinces as only one who has heard both sides, and has lived long to weigh both, can convince. Here is an extract from his article on 'Marriage':

'The truth is that though marriage is wonderful good discipline for many kinds of jades and rogues, though many weaklings have been saved by it from sinking, and much indifferent honesty established in tolerable courses, nor rogues, nor jades, nor fools are worthy of marriage; and how should they be, since it is the sweetest and noblest companionship that man can find?'

It is simply, Mr. Greenwood continues, because there are so many jades and rogues in the world, and 'because marriage finds them out,' that '*of course* there are many unhappy marriages.' More even than meet the eye. But if the unhappy hide their skeletons, the happy, he contends, are still more inclined to shyly conceal their joy. 'So many skeletons in closets, no doubt, but how many Cupids behind curtains? If wretchedness will feign contentment, is joy to blab? It is the one joy that never blabs.' Indeed, it is to the disadvantage of the optimistic philosopher that happiness never records its

vote. If the joy of the world were only as vocal as the misery, the wail of the pessimist would be drowned in the hymn of general thanksgiving. On this question of marriage Mr. Greenwood has evidently gone for advice to the two greatest living authorities—Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Coventry Patmore, whom he hails as 'Love's Laureate and Prime Philosopher.' When he says of marriages that 'the happiest, be it noted, are those in which man and wife are chums,' we remember the scene where Clotilde sat down with Alvan and 'drank an old Rhine wine with him'—'boon-fellow of the rollicking faun.' When, with much true wisdom, he celebrates the great but obscure service of 'habitude' in marriage, we recall the 'Wedding Sermon' in 'The Victories of Love'—perhaps, without exception, the compactest body of wisdom upon wedlock to be found in any book. To say that Mr. Greenwood's article on 'habitude' is worthy to sit as a gloss at the foot of that remarkable 'sermon' is the best compliment one can pay it. Habitude, he says, is 'the name of a good genius which has brought happiness unperceived to many who never recognised their benefactor.' After the blisses of the honeymoon, after the 'impulsive jarrings' of the first year of life together, the married ones find that 'habitude' has 'been born between them.' 'Companionship brought its unfailing round of little duties and amenities. Small troubles, common to both, sowed in the dark a new growth of small tendernesses. Now an endearing weakness appeared on the one side, and now a kindly patience on the other; and all these things did habitude foster and increase till the love of Robin

and Robinetta rose again from the dead—changed into a smiling, sweet, and comely affection.' But though Mr. Greenwood's common-sense thus corrects his romance, it is very far from eclipsing it, as any one who turns to his glowing vindication of 'Calf-love' may discover. 'The term "calf-love,"' he says, 'was the invention of the same small wit that makes fun of old maids.' 'Love at first sight,' he happily says, 'is love with second sight,' and his book is rich in such happy phrases. 'Affection,' he wittily figures as 'the Three per Cents. of the tender passion,' and he advises us to invest as much as we can in that admirable security. In one place he speaks of 'ugliness carried to the extreme where it becomes a mystery,' and in another of 'beauty skin deep, with nought but baseness and the brute below'—'Beauté du Diable.' He has many forcible passages of moving prose, with which a man may well fortify himself against the sirens that so artfully imitate the songs of love—nay, sing them better than love itself; for is it not their *métier* to sing, and that of love's only to love?

John Davidson: **'A Random Itinerary.'**

MR. DAVIDSON'S solitary ramble about the sub-suburban districts of London was occasionally broken in upon by the phantom of a certain 'imaginary disputant,' who took upon himself to combat some of the 'itinerant's' *obiter dicta* of thought. Thus it comes about that crisp dialogue here and there diversifies the face of Mr. Davidson's

diary, dialogue which, though it may be slight in its content, still proves that its writer has a genuine instinct for the dialogue form, in prose as well as in verse. Of course, one could be well sure of that from the *Fleet Street Eclogues*. One of these dialogues occurs as an epilogue, a bold epilogue, written as Mr. Stevenson once wrote a preface, 'by way of criticism.' That imaginary disputant, having, he says, read the proofs of the foregoing 'Itinerary,' takes upon himself to make certain mildly adverse criticisms upon it, which the 'itinerant,' with true Scotch hardihood, and a pipe sturdily gripped within his pugnaciously smiling mouth, takes much as a terrier takes a rat. Naturally the disputant, a poor wraith of tobacco-smoke, has little chance with the man who not only created him, but was also reporting the dialogue.

With any but an imaginary disputant Mr. Davidson would not have been let off so easily. For he propounds one or two artistic theories which tempt one sorely to take on oneself the *rôle* of veritable disputant. The disputant objected that the author 'seems not to have made as much of it as he might,' that 'he has not worked it up sufficiently,' that 'he repeats images about trees and blossoms, the sun and the moon,' that 'the true spirit of the rambler' is lacking, that the itinerant doesn't seem to have 'loitered' enough. To him Mr. Davidson thus replies with ready paradox. Concerning the repetition of the imagery, it was not the author's fault, he says:

'He describes what I saw, and in the way I saw it. If the blackthorn blossom appeared to me for a whole forenoon like splashes

of white paint on the brown woods, why shouldn't he say it as often as I noted it? A mere "derangement of epitaphs" is a very paltry trick. This repetition you object to is artistic. . . .'

Mr. Davidson then silences the disputant with impressive references to the 'catchword' method of Carlyle and Arnold, to 'parallelism in the old Hebrew writings,' to the chorus in a song and the burden to a ballad. In regard to the charge of not loitering enough, he continues:

'I never loitered when I wanted to hurry, or hurried when I felt the disposition to loiter. The things that interested me I bade the author write of. When he questioned me concerning villages and towns which I had passed through unobservantly, I told him of green trees and turquoise skies, or of a foolish book, or of a wash at a pump, or of my talks with you. It is my mood which he has recorded, and it is a genuine record. When he wished to insert his own reflections, when he asked me for after-thoughts, "No," I said, "here are the thoughts, the half-thoughts, the moods that came to me on the way, and here are my discoursings with my familiar, the Imaginary Disputant. These only you must use of reflective matter." The author consulted me for every sentence. His book is a faithful account of my impressions.'

Here is realism, and M. Maurice Barrès with his theory of the *moi* in literature, with a vengeance. Obviously, it is too long a matter to discuss here, nor indeed is this necessary. For Mr. Davidson's poetry proves that the statement is but a desperate whim to which the disputant had cornered him. If he intended his book to have a scientific value—as indeed he would try to make us believe by his delightfully affected note, in which he pretends that the value of his book is in its being 'some notes and impressions of the remarkable spring and summer of 1893'—then his theory would be

as unassailable as his practice would be assailable. Will he throw things at us if we whisper the commonplace that 'art is art' just 'because it is not nature'; and that while too much cooking of an original impression is likely to lose it, yet it is not necessarily to be given us raw. Besides, supposing your autocratic impressionist starts on his rambles in an unfortunate mood, is dull and unimpressionable, are we to accept him dulness and all? His book may be a true record, but it is not necessarily literature. Literature comes of the careful cultivation of golden moments. If we ask our impressionist, 'What went ye out for to see?' and he answers, 'Nothing, so I have written it down,' we have the right to retort, 'But it was your business to see and feel something, and if you chanced to have fallen upon an evil day for your impression, you should have waited for a favourable one. A painter does not paint when the light is bad, and a writer has no business to ply his pen in a fit of the spleen.' However, though Mr. Davidson's book might, I think, have been brighter had he not written it up to this theory of Washingtonian honesty, yet it is very interesting reading for all that. For Mr. Davidson is too full a man, open to impression on too many sides, not to have had many interesting impressions as he rambled along. His, too, is that rare gift of being able to evoke the unfamiliar from the accustomed, to throw strange lights of novelty across things we have passed by a hundred times without so much as noticing them. These rambles of his about Epping Forest, Wood Green, Highgate, the Isle of Dogs, etc., breathe a genuine air of romantic adventure, though

nothing happens, and country smells as from the Forest of Arden blow through all his pages.

It is in Mr. Davidson's power to make a very good book of the kind, a classic it might be; but he must first waive his literary theories, and be content to give us Arcady. Nor must he be above pretending that his reflections were more brilliant at times than they really were. The morning inspiration must often need the help of the midnight oil, as Wordsworth practically admitted in his famous definition of poetry, as 'emotion remembered in tranquillity.' Mr. Davidson's other books have shown that he possesses the rare gift of invention. Why not use it? He shows a certain measure of it in the charming unexpectedness with which he employs his other gift of allusiveness. You never know at what tangent the most ordinary encounter will send him. For example, when he meets a farmer on the hillside among the Chilterns, and holds a colloquy with him on the properties of soot as manure, you are all of a sudden arrived at the Home Rule Bill, and this vivid picture of Mr. Gladstone walking in Bond Street. The farmer has suggested that Mr. Gladstone's real gift is hypnotism:

'"I dare say there 's something in that," rejoins the itinerant. "Last summer I saw Gladstone shortly after the election walking in Bond Street about six in the evening. Nobody was within three hundred yards of us. He came along slowly, his legs somewhat wide apart, as an old man walks, but erect, with his head thrown back. There was something stealthy in his motion, as of an old lion walking in an unaccustomed place. His eyes—immense orbs they are now, much larger than in his younger days—were full of a dream away far in front of him, but ready to flash. It was Saturday, and all the shops were shut. There was no sound

in the street but Gladstone's light tread, for I stood aside till he should pass. As he turned into Burlington Gardens, eighty-three years on his head, and every ideal strong within him still, I thought I had seen the most wonderful sight London had yet offered me. Black broadcloth, ordinary silk hat—it was yet to me as if a vision had passed."'

In that epilogue of which I have spoken the itinerant makes the statement that 'the author has taken to making ballads.' 'What kind of ballads?' asks the disputant, and then the itinerant takes from his pocket 'A Ballad of a Musician,' and reads, the book closing with the well-deserved 'Hurrah!' of the disputant. I wish I had space to show how very fine this ballad is. Writing of *Fleet Street Eclogues*, I remarked on the great power and magic of the closing ballad. Here is another to match it. Let Mr. Davidson give us a volume of such ballads, and Fame is his, bound hand and foot.

Augustine Birrell: 'Men, Women, and Books.'

MR. BIRRELL'S *Essays about Men, Women, and Books* is his best book since his first series of *Obiter Dicta*. The humour which one somewhat missed from the second series and from *Res Judicatæ* is back again with us in these essays, as genial, as unexpected, as free from trick or mannerism as Mr. Birrell's humour always is. Mr. Birrell is perhaps more properly described as a humourist than a wit, for, though one is continually kept smiling to oneself as one turns his pages, it is often a little difficult to show just cause for our mirth

in the form of quotation. The humour is present in some indefinable way, just as that 'style' which Mr. Birrell also possesses inheres elusively somewhere amid his simple chatty English. With the exception of Mr. Lang, we have no other genuine *causeur* so good as Mr. Birrell. It is true that his essays are slight, slighter even than Mr. Lang's, but they have the genuine 'touch,' and, brief as they are, it is surprising how much ground Mr. Birrell contrives to cover in a dozen small pages. He has the knack of sketching in the salient characteristics of his figures, without any apparent intention of giving us even a thumb-nail portrait. An anecdote or two, a quotation, and a little criticism: and before we realise it we seem to have become more familiar with his men and women and books than much more laborious reading had been able to make us.

Of course, it would be very easy to indicate Mr. Birrell's shortcomings. Obviously his writings do not, as he says of De Quincey's, 'belong to the realm of rapture.' Romance, idealism, lyricism of any sort, even an average ardour of temperament, must be sought in the works of others. Mr. Birrell's muse is common-sense. He takes the middle-aged view of life—a view it seems difficult for people who have lived a little not to take. He has no illusions, but believes in facts and the necessity of facing them; and for the conduct of life he finds the loyal, old-fashioned virtues the best yet invented. Probably in framing his admirable synopsis of 'the noble gospel according to Dr. Johnson,' he has also given us his own. Here are a few of the tenets:

'Your father begot you, and your mother bore you. Honour them both. Husbands, be faithful to your wives. Wives, forgive your husbands' unfaithfulness—once. No grown man who is dependent on the will, that is the whim, of another can be happy, and life without enjoyment is intolerable gloom. Therefore, as money means independence and enjoyment, get money, and having got it keep it. A spendthrift is a fool. . . . Never get excited about causes you do not understand, or about people you have never seen. Keep Corsica out of your head. Life is a struggle with either poverty or ennui; but it is better to be rich than to be poor. Death is a terrible thing to face. The man who says he is not afraid of it lies. . . . The future is dark. I should like more evidence of the immortality of the soul. There is great solace in talk. We—you and I—are shipwrecked on a wave-swept rock. . . . Let us constitute ourselves a club, stretch out our legs and talk. We have minds, memories, varied experiences, different opinions. Sir, let us talk, not as men who mock at fate, not with coarse speech or foul tongue, but with a manly mixture of the gloom that admits the inevitable, and the merriment that observes the incongruous. Thus talking we shall learn to love another, not sentimentally, but fundamentally.'

Mr. Birrell is in no danger from 'Corsica.' The mysteries at either end of existence he has long since given up. To vary the well-known Saxon image of the bird flying out of the darkness, resting awhile in the light and warmth of the hearth, and flying out into the darkness on the other side, one might say that Mr. Birrell perfectly realises the profound 'immensities and eternities' on each side of him, but, seeing that it is no use worrying about them, wisely draws to the fire with a well-filled pipe, and forgets both darknesses in an eighteenth-century author. Nor do the more showy, passionate, picturesque, phenomena within that little circle of the so-called known particularly attract him. With that pipe, that eighteenth-century author, and a

friend with whom to exchange legal anecdotes of this or that eminent old judge, Mr. Birrell will probably keep happy for an indefinite number of years. He likes to 'understand' his pleasures also, and prefers them without any disturbing element of 'rapture,' plain cosy diversions that involve as little admixture as possible of the 'pathos of eternity.'

Not that Mr. Birrell has not his ideals and aspirations; but he is one of those quiet, strong men who noiselessly attain rather than shout about them. In any real crisis of thought we should know where to find him, which we could not safely say of many people who protest more. The 'men' dealt with in this volume include Dean Swift, Lord Bolingbroke, Sterne, Dr. Johnson, Richard Cumberland, Alexander Knox, De Quincey, Sir John Vanbrugh, and John Gay; the 'women' are Hannah More and Marie Bashkirtseff, and it is particularly consoling to read Mr. Birrell on the latter insufferable young woman; the bookish papers treat of Roger North's Autobiography, 'Books Old and New,' Bookbinding, Poets Laureate, 'Hours in a Library,' 'Americanisms and Briticisms,' and 'Authors and Critics.' Mr. Birrell shares the opinion of many literary men that reviews have little to do with a book's success, and gives this delightful picture of the kind of reader who really makes and mars literary reputations:

'The volume of unprinted criticism,' he says, 'is immense, and its force amazing. Lunching last year at a chophouse, I was startled to hear a really important oath emerge from the lips of a clerkly-looking man who sat opposite me, and before whom the hurried writer had placed a chump-chop. "Take the thing away," cried the man, with the oath aforesaid, "and bring me a

loin-chop." Then, observing the surprise I could not conceal that an occurrence so trifling should have evoked an expression so forcible, the man muttered half to himself and half to me: "There is nothing I hate so much in the wide world as a chump-chop, unless indeed it be" (speaking slowly and thoughtfully) "the poetry of Mr. ——," and here the fellow, unabashed, named right out the name of a living poet who, in the horrid phrase of the second-hand booksellers, is "much esteemed" by himself and some others. After this explosion of feeling the conversation between us became frankly literary, but I contrived to learn in the course of it that this chump-chop hater was a clerk in an insurance office, and had never printed a line in his life. He was, as sufficiently appears, a whimsical fellow, full of strange oaths and stranger prejudice, but for criticism of contemporary authors—keen, searching, detached, genuine—it would be impossible to find his equal in the Press. The man is living yet—he was lately seen in Cheapside, elbowing his way through the crowd with a masterful air, and so long as he lives he criticises, and what is more, permeates his circle—for he must live somewhere—with his opinions.'

One of Mr. Birrell's best papers is on a quite non-literary subject, viz. 'The Bona-Fide Traveller,' which is full of quaint waggery. Altogether a most welcome, gay, companionable book, just the kind of book to read with a pipe on that ruddy hearth betwixt the two eternities.

Tom Hood: **Ainger's Selections.**

THERE is a neat little edition of Hood which was edited by his son and published by Moxon, and one of the two corpulent little volumes is labelled 'serious' and the other 'comic.' Doubtless there are other editions similarly divided, but I happen to have grown up with this par-

ticular edition, the arbitrary labels on which have always appealed to me as painfully insistent memorials of the sad story of Hood's life. Hood himself would probably have reversed the labels, for to him his 'comic' verse had a significance which approached more nearly to the tragic, and in his 'serious' verse were hived the few truly joyous moments of his life. When, having made his name as a humourist in 1825 by his *Odes and Addresses to Great People*, and the two series of *Whims and Oddities* in 1826, he sought a hearing for his serious muse in 1827 with *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, *Hero and Leander*, *Lycus the Centaur*, *and Other Poems*, the volume fell still-born from the press. Henceforth it became to him a sort of mausoleum where his young muse lay buried. He bought up the remainder sheets himself, to save them from 'the butter-shops'—a tenderness which, his son surmises, he would have been little likely to extend to his comic writings in a similar plight. Hood, indeed, was the very type of Punchinello, condemned to make others laugh, with his own heart breaking. Not that he took any such sentimental view of himself. He was too manfully courageous to indulge in self-pity. 'To make laugh is my calling,' says he. 'I must jump, I must grin, I must tumble, I must turn language head over heels, and leap through grammar,' and he works at his business like any other business man, whose calling may not be exactly to his liking. And, indeed, without hardness of heart, with no forgetfulness of the cramping, painful circumstances of his life, his narrow means, his wearing illness, which kept

him dying for twenty years, one may ask whether for a man who so little pitied himself Hood has not been a little over-pitied. None of the 'poor fellows' of literature have been more be-pitied. Thackeray set the tune in his somewhat lachrymose *Roundabout Paper*, 'On a Joke I once heard from the late Thomas Hood.' And even so unsentimental a critic as Mr. Henley drops something as near a tear as he ever gets upon his grave. Yet Hood himself has made it impossible for us to describe his life as really unhappy. Suffering depends on the sufferer. When a man is so brave a philosopher, so truly the 'captain of his soul,' as Hood, surely pity is somewhat superfluous and a little impertinent. In a preface to 'Hood's Own,' Hood once described himself as 'a gentleman literally enjoying bad health,' and there was truth as well as jest in the phrase. 'To be sure, matters look darkly enough; but the more need for the lights.' 'Be bowled out or caught out, but never throw down the bat. As to Health, it's the weather of the body—it hails, it rains, it blows, it snows at present, but it may clear up by-and-by.' So run other maxims from this essay on 'Practical Cheerful Philosophy,' which Hood ends with a particularly characteristic quip. His physician has told him, he says, that 'anatomically' his 'heart is lower hung than usual.' 'But, what of that?' still retorts the indomitable punster, '*the more need to keep it up!*'

No doubt this very courage has its pathetic side, but what use has such a man for pity? It is true that he suffers, but it is also true that he is strong. Pity is for the weak, not for such men as Hood and Lamb.

Whatever Hood lacked, however he suffered, surely fortune had allowed him a very valuable compensation in endowing him with his uniquely happy temperament. He might just as easily have been born to see only the dark side of things. Then it had been time for pity. Thackeray grows very eloquent on the anomaly of a man capable of writing 'The Song of the Shirt' laying waste his powers in joke and pun for 'Hood's Own.' '"You great man, you good man, you true genius and poet," I cry out, as I turn page after page, "do, do make no more of these jokes, but be yourself, and take your station."' But surely Thackeray writes here too much as if Hood's punning was a trick he had learned for business purposes, instead of its being an instinctive, incorrigible faculty of his genius. It was characteristic of him from the beginning, and so much was it his method that we often find him at it in his professedly serious poems. Canon Ainger draws attention to a characteristic example in the fine 'Ode to Melancholy':

> 'Even the bright extremes of joy
> Bring on conclusions of disgust,
> Like the sweet blossom of the *May*,
> Whose fragrance ends in *must*.'

The italics are mine. In like manner, it has been often remarked how, illustrating two other lines in the same poem—

> 'There 's not a string attuned to mirth,
> But has its chord in Melancholy'—

Hood's professedly comic poems so often turn on death, in some grimly travestied form. A good half

of the present selection of 'Humorous Poems' recall Holbein in the grisly pleasantry with which the King of Terrors is, so to say, poked in the ribs. Opening in the middle we come upon 'Death's Ramble,' which concludes thus :

'Death saw two players playing at cards,
But the game wasn't worth a dump,
For he quickly laid them flat with a spade,
To wait for the final trump!'

No one can need to be reminded of the end of the love of 'Faithless Sally Brown,' or how 'Tim Turpin' finished his career :

'On Horsham-drop, and none can say
It was a drop too much.'

Then there is 'Mary's Ghost' with its pathetic complaint of body-snatchers :

'It 's very hard them kind of men
Won't let a body be!'

and Jack's ghost also, which appeared inconsiderately to his family at supper-time to spoil their little feast of cod :

'You live on land, and little think
What passes in the sea;
Last Sunday week, at 2 P.M.,
That cod was picking me!'

Again, the fate of Ben Battle claims the votive tear, who, having hung himself for love of 'faithless Nelly Gray,' and thus having

'for his second time in life,
Enlisted in the Line,'

was buried at the four cross-roads, 'with a *stake* in

his inside!' But one might go on for ever multiplying such familiar quotations—familiar, but always irresistibly fresh—to illustrate Hood's somewhat creepy banter of death. One contrasts his grim jocularity with Lamb's almost hysterical fear. Those who live nearest death, doctors and nurses, for example, seem to lose the sense of his terror. Hood had lived so long in his shadow that, doubtless, he had grown not to 'mind' him. With his own sempstress, he could say:

'But why do I talk of Death,
That Phantom of grisly bone?
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own.'

Though we may regret that Hood was not allowed the leisure, or inspiration, to write more than two such poems as 'The Song of the Shirt,' more sonnets like that great one to 'Silence,' more lines like:

'Is't not enough to vex our souls,
And fill our eyes, that we have set
Our love upon a rose's leaf,
Our hearts upon a violet?'

Or:

'The sunniest things throw sternest shade,
And there is ev'n a happiness
That makes the heart afraid!'

such as we find in the 'Ode to Melancholy'; yet, on the other hand, who would exchange one of his best puns for another 'Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,' an unwieldy, disproportionate piece of fancy, hardly illumined by a fine line, or for such a very tame presentation of a tragic story as 'Hero and Leander'? Hood suggested for his epitaph, 'Here lies one who

spat more blood and made more puns than any man living.' Doubtless he did too much of both, but his puns, as Canon Ainger points out, are very different from those of other people. They are no mere play on words, but in addition to the double sound have usually a double meaning. They have an intellectual, and sometimes even a poetic value. That pun on 'May' and 'must' cited above will serve as an excellent example of Hood's serious punning. Hood's puns are so good, Canon Ainger admirably remarks, because he came down to them 'from a higher ground,' the higher ground of 'the poetic heart and a vividness and rapidity of imagination such as never before had found such an outlet.' 'In the hands of a Hood the pun becomes an element in his fancy, his humour, his ethical teaching, even his pathos.' He who blows through bronze may breathe through silver. Hood's serious work is, indeed, regrettably small in bulk, but its quality is so masterly that no after-time can insult his memory by regarding him merely as a funny man who coined his heart in puns. And posterity will, one feels sure, cherish his memory far more than the present generation can be said to do. For Hood was three things too seldom found in one skin—a poet, a wit, and a true man. Hood could have no better epitaph than Landor's noble lines:

> 'Jealous, I own it, I was once;
> That wickedness I here renounce.
> I tried at wit, it would not do;
> At tenderness, that failed me too;
> Before me on each path there stood
> The witty and the tender Hood.'

OUT of the strong came forth sweetness. Samson's riddle could hardly find a fitter answer than Elizabethan poetry. What in all the hives of the world is so sweet as Elizabethan lyric poetry? And what is it that distinguishes its sweetness from the sickly sweetness, say, of our recent æsthetic poetry? Simply that it was the sweetness hidden in the hearts of strong men—the infinite tenderness of heroes. What makes King Harry's wooing fill our eyes on the instant, when courtly wooers leave us cold? Because he had but just won Agincourt. How true was Lovelace's word. Our poets too often love honour less, and so they cloy our palates. Elizabethan sweetness is the sweetness of cold spring water; Elizabethan passion, as a modern writer expresses it, is 'noble strength on fire.' The Elizabethan poet wrote with his sword and breastplate hung above his desk. Like that 'belated Elizabethan,' old William Chamberlayne, he was ready at any moment to put down one and gird on the other:

Michael Drayton: 'The Battaile of Agincourt.'

> 'I must
> Let my pen rest awhile, and see the rust
> Scoured from my own sword.'

It is that background of manhood which makes the love-poetry of Browning so uniquely sweet in latter-day poetry. It is the soldier's kiss the woman loves best, the embrace of the heroic spirit.

Lyrical sweetness, fertility of invention, richness of descriptive power, are Drayton's most characteristic qualities, but along with these he has the great style of

an heroic time. He has, perhaps, little of the dramatic gift, as usually understood, though, as Mr. Symonds has admonished us, much of the so-called dramatic work of the Elizabethans is really lyrical. Besides, Drayton had one essential of the dramatic gift: he could at least make single figures live and move before us. Witness his description in the poem under notice of various incidents typical of all the ferment of preparation which followed Henry's declaration of war:

'In all men's mouthes now was no word but warre,
As though no thing had any other name;
And folke would aske of them arriv'd from farre,
What forces were preparing whence they came?
'Gainst any bus'nesse 'twas a lawfull barre
To say for France they were; and 'twas a shame
For any man to take in hand to doe
Ought, but something that did belong thereto. . . .

Tents and Pavillions in the fields are pitcht
(E'n full wrought up their Roomthynesse to try),
Windowes, and Towers, with Ensignes are inricht,
With ruffling Banners, that doe brave the sky,
Wherewith the wearied Labourer, bewitcht
To see them thus hang waving in his eye,
His toylsome burthen from his back doth throwe,
And bids them worke that will, to France hee 'll goe.'

Surely that labourer is still alive in Drayton's verse as when he threw his burden down with such infectious valour. Or, take this picture of the old veteran 'with teares of joy' recalling to his son the English valour at Cressy:

'And, Boy, quoth he, I have heard thy Grandsire say
That once he did an English Archer see,
Who, shooting at a French twelve score away,
Quite through the body stuck him to a Tree.

Upon their strengths a King his Crowne might lay:
Such were the men of that brave age, quoth he,
When with his Axe he at his Foe let drive,
Murrian and scalpe downe to the teeth did rive.

One other picture, of noble touching farewells:

'There might a man have seene in ev'ry streete,
The Father bidding farewell to his Sonne:
Small children kneeling at their Father's feete:
The Wife with her deare Husband ne'r had done:
Brother, his Brother, with adieu to greete:
One Friend to take leave of another runne:
The Mayden with her best belov'd to part,
Gave him her hand, who tooke away her heart.'

Though thus excellent in parts, Dr. Garnett is, of course, right in saying that as a whole the 'Battaile of Agincourt' has many faults of construction. Drayton seems to have exercised no selection upon his materials, but to have followed the chronicler almost slavishly from point to point: though, as Dr. Garnett adds, 'old Holinshed at his worst was no contemptible writer.' He has, too, observed no sense of proportion between the parts: he describes the siege of Harfleur with Pre-Raphaelite minuteness, but treats the battle itself with relatively much greater brevity, and his poem dies anything but proudly. Its ending gives one the impression that he had grown tired before he reached it. One characteristic sin against proportion is a long catalogue of the English ships, in which at least, said Ben Jonson, in somewhat doubtful complimentary verses (which we may further discount by Jonson's remark to Drummond, that 'Drayton feared him; and he esteemed not of him'), he had certainly surpassed Homer; and also a

description of all the armorial banners carried by the battalions of the various counties. In themselves, these descriptions, however, are delightful; done as no poet but Drayton could have done them, alive with that untiring invention which, in the 'Polyolbion,' was able to so remarkably vitalise the topography of forty counties. It is true too, as Dr. Garnett remarks in a most admirable introduction which leaves nothing to be said, that Drayton gives us no comprehensive view of the battle. 'He minutely describes a series of episodes, in themselves often highly picturesque, but we are no better able to view the conflict as a whole than if we ourselves had fought in the ranks.' So Jonson, though with less justice, spoke of Daniel, in his talks with Drummond. 'Daniel,' he said, 'wrott Civil Warres, and yett hath not one battle in all his book.' In the naturalism of some of Drayton's episodes we are disagreeably reminded of *La Débâcle:*

> 'One with a gleave neere cut off by the waste,
> Another runnes to ground with halfe a head:
> Another, stumbling, falleth in his flight,
> Wanting a legge, and on his face doth light.'

And terribly grim is the description of the ferocious onslaught of the English:

> 'The dreadfull bellowing of whose strait-brac'd Drummes;
> To the French sounded like the dreadfull doome, . . .
> Whilst Scalps about like broken potsherds fly,
> And kill, kill, kill, the Conquering English cry.'

Whatever deductions, however, we make from Drayton's poem, it remains an inspiring piece of work: and though the patriotism may seem perhaps at times a

little strident to ears attuned to the philosophic pleading of the historical spirit, yet it is patriotism largely tempered by that chivalric admiration for the courage of a fallen foe, which was so noble a trait of glorious 'King Harry':

> 'Henry the fift, that man made out of fire,
> Th' Imperiall wreath placed on his Princely browe.'

As a complete impression, filled from end to end like a trumpet with martial spirit, Drayton's ballad on the same theme is more successful. It can hardly be said to be well known to the general reader, save under the disguise of Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' for the modern poet has somewhat lavishly reaped where the forgotten old poet sowed. All that is stirring in the 'Light Brigade,' the wonderful battle metre, is Drayton's; and, putting the two ballads side by side, it is impossible to say that Tennyson has improved on his original in any quality. He has certainly written stirring new words to an old strain, but in such a case the strain is everything.

> 'Fayre stood the winde for France,
> When we our sailes advance,
> Nor now to prove our chance
> Longer not tarry.
> But put unto the mayne:
> At Kaux, the mouth of Seine,
> With all his warlike trayne
> Landed King Harry.'

A patriotic fancy may be suffered to reflect, on Tennyson's adaptation of this spirited stanza, that our modern valour is thus proved still to match the brave

old tunes. Drayton dedicated his ballad 'To my Frinds the Camber-Britans and theyr Harp.' He was a great lover of the Celt, and in a dedication to the 'Polyolbion' makes an affectionate reference to 'my loved Wales.' Fame has dealt shabbily with him. Lesser poets fill more conspicuous niches; but obscure as he has remained, he has been a rich strain of influence in many another poet; for he is 'good to steal from,' as Fuseli said of Blake. The general reader knows him, perhaps, only by his noble valedictory sonnet, 'Since there's no help,' of which even some critics have attempted to rob him on behalf of Shakespeare. His charming, but possibly a little overrated, fairy poem, 'Nimphidia,' is perhaps next best known, and 'the Ballad of Agincourt' has probably as wide—or narrow—an audience. But with these three poems any wide reputation that Drayton may be said to have stops. Who now reads the 'Polyolbion,' that river epic, which imitates its theme in its quaintly meandering course? Here and there may be seen a rapt angler for fine passages, scantily dotted along its banks, and there is no better angling in British poetry. 'The Baron's Warres' are even more in shadow. And yet what glowing passages wait ready for the seeker. Here is a verse taken at random from the love-making of Queen Isabel and Mortimer, love-making, like Homer's, on a background of black battle:

'Her loose gold haire—O gold, thou art too base!
Were it not sinne to name those silke threds haire?—
Declining as to kisse her fairer face;
But no word faire enough for thing so faire.

O what high wond'rous Epithete can grace,
Or give the due prayse to a thing so rare!
But where the Pen failes, Pensill cannot show it,
Nor can be knowne, unlesse the minde doe knowe it.'

Most charming of all, *England's Heroicall Epistles*, the imaginary letters of noble English lovers, full of valour and sweetness of loving, await, like an undiscovered country, the infrequent reader. The Chiswick Press should complete the good work thus begun by another Drayton volume, including at least these *Heroicall Epistles* and the sonnet series entitled *Idea*. Their edition of the *Agincourt* is most welcome—a worthy version of a fine poem:

'O! when shall Englishmen
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed agen
Such a King Harry?'

or such another poet as Michael Drayton?

The volume has for frontispiece a fine portrait of the old poet, a face of solid English power; and one cannot do better than recommend the poem to the reader in the noble words of Drayton's dedication:

'To you those Noblest of Gentlemen, of these Renowned Kingdomes of Great Britaine: who in these declining times have yet in your brave bosomes the sparkes of that sprightly fire, of your couragious Ancestors; and to this houre retaine the seedes of their magnanimitie and greatnesse, who out of the vertue of your mindes love and cherish neglected Poesie, the delight of Blessed soules, and the language of Angels.'

Coleridge: Dykes Campbell's 'Memoir.'

MR. BIRRELL, in the course of his recent essays has something to the effect that it is ill slating a poor fellow who has been dust for so many years, and has therefore — save, maybe, through expensive Theosophical mediums—no opportunity of a rejoinder. In another place, with some appearance of inconsistency, he admonishes us that if we must practise on somebody, a dead donkey is fairer sport for flogging than a live one, with she-donkeys and little donkeys to feed and educate. Which advice ought we to follow in regard to Coleridge, who may be described as dead lion and dead donkey in about equal proportions? I confess that to the present writer he is one of the most provoking figures in biography, and I never encounter his grotesquely incongruous personality, his high-falutin' philosophy, so angelically idealistic, and his application of it in his daily life so contemptibly unsuccessful, to say the least, without a very ardent desire to just meet him some day in Hades with a good knotted horsewhip. If it were not for his ugly slothful side, Arnold's famous description of Shelley as 'a beautiful but ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain' would be a still better description of Coleridge. If Shelley were ineffectual, what of Coleridge? Scott aptly compared him to 'a lump of coal rich with gas, which lies expending itself in puffs and gleams, unless some shrewd body will clap it into a cast-iron box, and compel the compressed element to do

itself justice.' Alas, that no such 'shrewd body' was to be found among Coleridge's too generous friends! He never got beyond 'puffs and gleams,' though indeed 'rich with gas' to the end. No man that ever lived made more pother and left less to show for it. None of the geese that have laid the golden eggs for mankind have cackled so much and laid so little. Yet none have been better fed, or granted more opportunities for incubation. With gifts that from his schooldays awakened admiration in all who knew him, with early recognition from the greatest of his contemporaries, with opportunities such as genius seldom finds, with devoted friends, who loved him not wisely but too well—he had the impudence to die in his sixty-third year, with nothing to show for his life but a tiny handful of poems some of which he had not even the grace to finish. But this, of course, is to judge Coleridge by those 'absolute standards' from which Mr. Pater would exempt him, and which, indeed, the world would seem to have agreed to waive in the case of its men of genius. And, after all, the world gets the best of it—posterity at any rate. Posterity has not, like his friends, to keep Coleridge; or, like Southey, to keep his wife; it has none of his absurdities and worse to put up with, and perhaps it is as well for a generation so pressed for time that it is safe out of reach of the Niagara of his loquacity. The prodigious dross has fallen away, the gold remains. And this being so, doubtless it best becomes us mercifully to be silent concerning the dross.

After all, the judgment upon him as man must remain undecided so long as freewill is a debatable question.

Either we shall beg the question by saying (what it seems hard to deny) that will-power, like other qualities, is either bestowed or withheld by the grace of God; or we shall scarcely have words strong enough in which to condemn certain aspects of Coleridge's career. Even those of us who deny the doctrine of freewill are so little able to escape from the illusion of it that we may be found condemning Coleridge in spite of ourselves. To such Peacock's little satire in 'Nightmare Abbey' will appeal with no little sympathy; especially when we encounter a passage so fatuous as that triumphant sophism in which Coleridge declared that 'the moral obligation is to me so very strong a stimulant that in nine cases out of ten it acts as a narcotic. The blow that should rouse, stuns me—'! Some of us may think that when philosophy has reached this point of refinement, it were well for it to turn back. Dealing with plain men, we have simpler formulæ for very similar phenomena. Southey said that his 'distractions' were not so much 'pecuniary' as narcotic, and I must say that, to my thinking, there is much to be said for Southey. Mr. Campbell strikes me as being a little hard on him, and occasionally on other of Coleridge's long-suffering friends, if for a moment they grow a little restive under his continued demands. However, the relative spirit admonishes me, and two lines of Coleridge's, spurred out of him by his friend Poole, when the Royal Institution lectures should have been in hand, and Coleridge could not raise a finger towards them:

> 'Let Eagle bid the Tortoise sunwards soar,
> As vainly Strength speaks to a broken Mind.'

Pace, Mr. Campbell; I would say that Coleridge's friends, with one or two exceptions, were too lenient with him. If, instead of lending him money, more of them had denied him his opium, as the Morgans and the Gilmans did, they had proved themselves the truer friends.

However, though these matters did unfortunately affect the quantity, they did not affect the quality of that imperishable little residuum of perfect poetry of which nothing can rob us. We may think, as we must, of Coleridge as a man. We may secretly lean to Carlyle's view of Coleridge as talker; Coleridge as 'logician and metaphysician' may have little to say to us; but Coleridge as 'bard' remains our inviolable possession. 'The wizard twilight Coleridge knew' is Mr. Watson's characterisation in 'Wordsworth's Grave,' and it expresses in a line the essence of his poetic charm. With the exception of Miss Christina Rossetti, there has been no English poet who has rendered the invisible, the 'supernatural,' with that peculiarly convincing thrill of his—that Celtic glamour. Keats, in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' exhibited the rare gift, but Coleridge beyond any poet sat most constantly at those

> '. . . magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.'

Mr. Swinburne has well said that in singing of everyday life he reverses the miracle of Antaeus. The contact with earth often robs him of his powers. But we must not press this truth too far. We must not forget the odes to France, to Dejection, to the Departing Year;

and though his poetry includes few completely fine poems, it abounds in splendid fragments.

'Stop, Christian passer-by!—Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same!'

THERE are few prettier toys than a private press—a really 'private' one. Perhaps it would not be too rigid a definition of such a press to say that it is one that you manage yourself, in your back garden, entirely for heart's delight, setting up your types, and pulling off your impressions for yourself, a wife or a friend being the only 'labour' legitimately employed. So soon as a practical working printer is called in to do the hard work, the essential personal nature of the hobby disappears. It is as though a child engaged a professional to play with its dolls. The distinction is borne out by, say, the development of the 'Kelmscott Press.' Once when Mr. Morris experimented in Gothic types for his own peculiar delight and that of a few friends, the 'Kelmscott Press' might have been described as a private press; but since it employs a staff of workmen, boasts a literary man as secretary, and is accessible to the pounds and

Robert Bridges: 'Shorter Poems' Book V.

pence of the public, it is difficult to see in what it differs from any other good printing-house, which, in so far as it is not a limited company, may indeed describe itself as a 'private concern,' but is a 'private press' in no other sense.

However, the press of Mr. Daniel, Fellow and Bursar of Worcester College, Oxford, is a private press within the strictest definition of the term, and its issues have, therefore, a unique personal character and distinction. Not alone are they notable as so many pages of quaint type ; they may be said to be genuinely famous by reason of two poets who are closely associated with them. The first issue of Mrs. Margaret L. Woods's *Lyrics* was printed by Mr. Daniel ; and, though Mr. Bridges' first appearance was through Pickering in 1873, and several of his volumes have been published by Messrs. Bell and Sons, it was through Mr. Daniel's private issues of his poems that he first became known to the little world of his admirers. Mr. Bridges' real first public appearance as a lyric poet, since that 1873 volume, was in the 1890 volume of *Shorter Poems*. In the same year he had issued, through Mr. Daniel, a book of sonnets, *The Growth of Love*, printed in Gothic types, nor has he yet favoured us with a less hieratic edition. Now we have an edition of the *Shorter Poems*, printed in the same types, in five 'books,' at five shillings a 'book' for subscribers. Books I., II., and V. are ready. The first four books are to be reprints of the 1890 volume ; 'Book Five' is entirely new. There are many whom this eccentric method of publication irritates, readers unbitten by the dilettanteism to which it appeals. Yet it is far from

being without defence. In an age of steam-printed, wire-stitched books—'things that steam can print and fold'—it is well that in ever so small a corner of bibliophiles the original mystery and sacredness of the printed word should still be remembered and reverenced. The reproach of 'dilettanteism' is often but a cheap sneer at what is, none the less, a rare and precious devotion. In the history of letters, how often has the 'dilettante' been the pioneer. Moreover, in Mr. Bridges' case there is this unmistakable fitness in the semi-private issue of his work: that it is work which, whatever the proper enthusiasm of his friends, can never make any general appeal. There is no call for a large or 'popular' edition. The archaic and affected forms which his issues take are also justified as being but outward expressions of the characteristics of his work. That he should be printed like sixteenth and seventeenth-century poets is fit, for is not the best in his song a cunningly caught echo of theirs? Mr. Bridges', need one say, is no ardent poetic temperament, compelled by the urgency of a new apocalypse of the world into inspired song. Indeed, he is a poet so much the reverse that there might almost seem an element of mirth in thus stating his antithesis. Some poets begin with a message or a vision, and pass on to find words for it; some others begin with words and pass on to find themes for them—concerned with what they say only in so far as it inspires them with a pleasing manner of saying it. The great and perfect poet is he who blends in one temperament the instincts both of prophet and artist. Mr. Bridges is one of those poets in whom the artist predominates.

One might call him an amateur of words and rhythms. He writes poetry as an amateur of music might take a fancy to revive the harpsichord; as, in fact, Mr. Daniel has taken to printing. Mr. Bridges' is no 'song of he bleeding throat.' His poetry is not all the world to him. And, as an inevitable consequence, he is not for all the world. But for some, need one say, his poetry has none the less, but somewhat the more, charm for that; the charm of an old garden trim with yew, rich in quaint flowers, freaked by antique art of long poetic cultivation, and fragrant with immemorial reminiscence—such an old garden as is thus described in one of the most striking of his new poems—'The Garden in September':

'Now thin mists temper the slow-ripening beams
Of the September sun: his golden gleams
On gaudy flowers shine, that prank the rows
Of high-grown hollyhocks, and all tall shows
That Autumn flaunteth in his bushy bowers:
Where tomtits hanging from the drooping heads
Of giant sunflowers, peck the nutty seeds,
And in the feathery aster bees on wing
Seize and set free the honied flowers,
Till thousand stars leap with their visiting:
While ever across the path mazily flit,
Unpiloted in the sun,
The dreamy butterflies
With dazzling colours powdered and soft glooms,
White, black and crimson stripes, and peacock eyes
Or on chance flowers sit,
With idle effort plundering one by one
The nectaries of deepest-throated blooms. . . .

And at all times to hear are drowsy tones
Of dizzy flies, and humming drones,

With sudden flap of pigeon wings in the sky,
Or the wild cry
Of thirsty rooks, that scour ascare
The distant blue, to watering as they fare
With creaking pinions, or—on business bent,
If aught their ancient politics displease,—
Wheel round their nested colony, and there
Settling in rugged parliament,
Some stormy council hold in the high trees.'

It is for such quaintly exact and yet fanciful little pictures of nature, an epicurean simplicity of phrase, a virtuosity of colour and rhythm, and an occasional touch of 'deliciousness,' that Mr. Bridges finds admirers. He seldom appeals to any other than the artistic sense. Even in his solemn and poignant 'Elegy on a Young Lady, whom Grief for the Death of her Betrothed Killed,' one feels that it is rather his keen literary joy in the sumptuous rhythm, with its appealing cadences, than the sense of loss, which is the inspiration. His love-songs breathe no passion. Passion is not Mr. Bridges' aim. Here is a typical example from the new verses :

'So sweet love seemed that April morn,
When first we kissed beside the thorn,
So strangely sweet, it was not strange
We thought that love could never change.

But I can tell—let truth be told—
That love will change in growing old :
Though day by day is nought to see,
So delicate his motions be.

And in the end 'twill come to pass
Quite to forget what once he was,
Nor even in fancy to recall
The pleasure that was all in all.

His little spring, that sweet we found,
So deep in summer floods is drowned,
I wonder, bathed in joy complete,
How love so young could be so sweet.'

How welcome the unexpectedly joyous turn of thought in the last verse. The poem that lingers most in the memory as one closes this little rustling sheaf is that entitled 'Founder's Day: A Secular Ode on the Ninth Jubilee of Eton College,' the blithe pictures in which may be contrasted with Gray's dismal prophecies:

'Here is eternal spring: for you
The very stars of heaven are new,
And aged Fame again is born
Fresh as a peeping flower of morn.

For you shall Shakespeare's scene unroll,
Mozart shall steal your ravished soul,
Homer his bardic hymn rehearse,
Virgil recite his maiden verse.

Now learn, love, have, do, be the best:
Each in one thing excel the rest:
Strive: and hold fast this truth of heaven—
To him that hath shall more be given.

Slow on your dial the shadows creep,
So many hours for food and sleep,
So many hours till study tire,
So many hours for heart's desire.

These suns and moons shall memory save,
Mirrors bright for her magic cave:
Wherein may steadfast eyes behold
A self that groweth never old.'

This is a poem on which the poet may be congratulated both as man and artist. Seldom has he given us so human, so homely a strain.

Richard Garnett: 'Poems.'

In reviewing one kind of poetry, either for praise or blame, we are apt to forget that there is any other, apt to glorify its excellence at the expense, may be, of greater, but especially to insist on its limitations, as though they were beyond all compensation. So of Dr. Garnett's poetry, the inevitable first criticism is that it is cold. It lacks that 'drop of ruddy human blood' which, said Lowell in a passage charmingly versified by Mr. Dobson, 'puts more life into the veins of a poem than all the delusive "aurum potabile" that can be distilled out of the choicest library.' It is classical, in the sense of that word which means rather petrification than the life everlasting of art; worse, it is 'academic.' No passion, no afflatus, no frenzies either of word or phrase; but all is calm, well-ordered, proportionate, neat, clear-seen and clear-said. 'Cold,' it is true, is Dr. Garnett's muse. But if we want hot blood in our song, is there any dearth of poets able to supply it, poets whose inspiring fount would seem to be rather some hot spring of Iceland than cool crystal stream of Castaly? If we want luxuriance and riot we know where to find them, for what one poet cannot give us another can. It is open to any one to say that the characteristics of Dr. Garnett's poetry are characteristics for which, temperamentally, he has but little sympathy. But it is the business of the critic to be as little at the mercy of his temperament as possible, and to be, so far as human nature can be, an impartial appreciator of all the

blessedly diversified 'creation' of art. Then books have their fortunate or unfortunate moments with us. Against such the critic must also be on his guard; for to be in the mood for Mr. Swinburne, and to take up Dr. Garnett, would be unfair to the latter and unfortunate for oneself. Herrick begged that his verses should not be read 'in sober mornings.' Sober mornings, however, are Dr. Garnett's opportunity—moods, so to say, when the head holds itself with a little aloofness above the warm cluster of senses beneath. Not that Dr. Garnett lacks 'humanity' so far as his interests are concerned. His themes are very varied in range, and love, and even passion, are to be found far from infrequently in his pages. Occasionally, in such a poem as the well-known 'Ballad of the Boat,' he breaks through the philosophic restraint of his manner into truly poignant expression:

'The stream was smooth as glass, we said: "Arise and let's away";
The Sirens sang beside the boat that in the rushes lay;
And spread the sail, and strong the oar, we gaily took our way.
When shall the sandy bar be crossed? When shall we find the bay? . . .

The moon is high up in the sky, and now no more we see
e spreading river's either bank, and surging distantly
e booms a sullen thunder as of breakers far away.
shall the sandy bar be crossed, now shall we find the
y! . . .

Wh rises white and awful as a shroud-enfolded ghost?
Wha oar of rampant tumult bursts in clangour on the coast?
Pull back! pull back! The raging flood sweeps every oar away.
O stream, is this thy bar of sand? O boat, is this the bay?'

Nor surely is this picture of Nausicaa, 'classical' theme though it be, quite without the ruddy drop :

> 'Come, thou old seaman, in my father's ships
> Nurtured and blanched, come, take me to the beach,
> And, while the white town slumbers in the moon,
> Teach me the rudder's governance, and sail's,
> And all the dexterous usage of the oar.
>
> For all my heart is with the oars and sails,
> And whatsoever stirreth in the deep,
> Vessel or fish, or wing of dipping bird,
> And drifted weed, and most of all itself,
> The lone vast deep, the lone lamenting deep,
> Wherewith no man abideth but the dead ;
> Therefore it moans, as one itself divides
> With desolate surge forlornly from his love.'

At all events, a wonderfully fine picture of the sea. Most characteristic and significant among Dr. Garnett's preferences is his predilection for the apologue, which, with the exception of Mr. Dobson, no recent poet cares about. Dr. Garnett is one of those wise men who go to the East. Gay might have envied him some of his neat allegories. 'The Fair Circassian,' 'The Broken Egg,' for example ; though the note of 'Fading-leaf and Fallen-leaf' is somewhat too profound for Gay. Well-known as it is, the last verse can hardly be quoted too often :

> 'Said Fallen-leaf to Fading-leaf—
> "Hast loved fair eyes and lips of gentle breath?
> Fade then and fall—thou hast had all
> That Life can give, ask somewhat now of Death."'

A similar sentiment is still more impressively

embodied in a sonnet to 'Age.' Referring to the autumnal and wintry death of 'Nature':

> 'No kindred we to her belovèd broods,
> If, dying these, we drew a selfish breath;
> But one path travel all her multitudes,
> And none dispute the solemn Voice that saith:
> "Sun to thy setting; to your autumn, woods;
> Stream to thy sea; and man unto thy death!"'

If Dr. Garnett is 'cold,' we must not forget that cold is antiseptic. His poetry may lack many qualities it had been pleasant to find in it, but it possesses one that in the long vigil of time counts beyond many others—the gift of phrase, the gift of saying. He has not studied classical models without learning from them so much of their secret of immortality. In his case the gift is rather reproductive than originally creative. He has no 'manner' of his own, he uses forms discovered by his predecessors, and he gives us little sense of his own individuality in the using. Much of what he has written is poetry for all that. For, perhaps, we shall one of these days come to realise that we are overdoing the demand for personality in art. One great original mind creates, and his disciples procreate. There are great 'personal' poets, but let us not forget that there may be lesser 'impersonal' ones too. The life of a book is independent of that of its author. Is it poetry, or is it not? If it is, what matter who the author or who his master?

Grant Allen: 'The Lower Slopes.'

'IT is said,' writes Mr. Stevenson, 'that a poet has died young in the breast of the most stolid.' Probably 'a somewhat minor bard,' he slyly adds. While he was alive we thought little of him. To confess a crime, we probably murdered him, and, burying him away in the deeps of unvisited drawers, piling upon him the mould of forgotten love-letters, and other abortive literary efforts, we persuaded ourselves that we did not care, and should never think of him again. But sooner or later, when, maybe, we have won other laurels, that poor young poet's ghost comes and wails in the ears of our success; we begin to think, in the words of 'Q,' that we had—

'. . . played it hard
Upon a rather hopeful minor bard,'

and we end by petitioning the Home Secretary for his exhumation. Mr. Grant Allen has reached this stage in the development of every distinguished man. But the other day the Duke of Argyll similarly gave up his dead. Mr. Lecky and Mr. Stevenson himself are other examples. Then there was Mr. Stopford Brooke, and before him George Eliot and Thackeray. But of course examples are numerous enough. It is the perhaps not unnatural craving of the artist 'to put to test art alien to the artist,' of the Dantes to draw Madonnas, the Raphaels to make a book of sonnets, the Goethes to invent a theory of colours. If a poet be permitted to

drop into science, may not a scientist also drop into poetry? Mr. Grant Allen is not exactly a Raphael, Dante, or Goethe, but he is a striking and interesting figure in present-day letters: when he likes, a writer of charming prose, a scientific observer with a rare gift of attractive exposition, a fearless social critic, who has done no little by his courageous, if somewhat Shelleyan utterances, to lead the present generation to that mount of promise from whence it seems just now to be looking hopefully across the future, an image which really belongs to a poem of Mr. Allen's, concluding with this charming verse:

'Yet we have no share in the soil
Whereto we have led our heirs;
We have borne the brunt of the toil,
But the fruit is theirs.
For the vineyards are goodly and wide
And more than a man may count,
But our grave shall be on the side
Of the Moabite mount.'

Apart from the personal interest thus attaching to Mr. Allen's 'Excursions round the base of Helicon' (and, unless the verse be hopelessly impossible, such interest is sufficient justification for such excursions), they prove also to have a perfect right to exist on their own account. They do not, of course, suggest that in Mr. Allen's buried poet we have lost another Tennyson or Keats. But they are graceful, and often forcible, expressions of genuine personal conceptions and convictions; and if they are, for the most part, philosophy and science in verse, rather than poetry, the verse has the merit of seeming the inevitable vehicle of the

thought, and is not infrequently warmed with something like the glow of genuine song.

Mr. Allen treats many themes in his short volume, the themes on which we are accustomed to listen to him. He opens with a meditative poem, somewhat in the Arnoldian vein, in which he recalls a night spent in musing on 'Magdalen Tower,' and gives an admirable expression to the old doubt of the possible subjectivity of the universe. Does the world really exist, or is it but a phantom of our dreaming:

'Am I alone the solitary centre
Of all the seeming universe around,
With mocking senses through whose portals enter
Unmeaning fantasies of sight and sound? . . .

I seem a passive consciousness of passion
Poised in the boundless vault of empty space;
A mirror for strange shapes of alien fashion
That come and go before my lonely face.'

And here are two other noteworthy verses:

'This very tree, whose life is our life's sister,
We know not if the ichor in her veins
Thrill with fierce joy when April dews have kissed her
Or shrink in anguish from October rains.
We search the mighty world above and under,
Yet nowhere find the soul we fain would find,
Speech in the hollow rumbling of the thunder,
Words in the whispering wind.

We yearn for brotherhood with lake and mountain
Our conscious soul seeks conscious sympathy,
Nymphs in the coppice, Naiads in the fountain,
Gods on the craggy height and roaring sea.
We find but soulless sequences of matter,
Fact linked to fact by adamantine rods,
Eternal bonds of former sense and latter,
Dead laws for living Gods.'

But the most striking poem in the volume is the fine Agnostic 'Prayer':

'A crowned Caprice is god of this world;
On his stony breast are his white wings furled.
No ear to listen, no eye to see,
No heart to feel for a man hath he.

But his pitiless arm is swift to smite;
And his mute lips utter one word of might,
'Mid the clash of gentler souls and rougher,
"Wrong must thou do, or wrong must suffer."
Then grant, O dumb, blind god, at least that we
Rather the sufferers than the doers be.'

The double rhymes are unfortunate in lines seven and eight, but, apart from that blemish, have we not here a noble thought expressed with vigour, and even finality — something expressed that needed expression, and properly finding it in verse rather than prose? Mr. Allen gives us one or two scientific apologues written with sprightly humour, as that of the jelly-fish who was 'The First Idealist'; and in a merry little poem on the loves of the zoophytes, 'In Coral Land,' he winds up with this gaily tripping verse:

'For a man, he tries,
And he toils and sighs,
To be mighty wise
And witty;
But a dear little dame
Has enough of fame
If she wins the name
Of pretty.'

In another tiny verse Mr. Allen expresses a more serious thought—*apropos* of a moth that has burned its wings in his candle:

'Why should a sob
For the vaguest smart
One moment throb
Through the tiniest heart?'

There is a not unexpected poem to Mr. Herbert Spencer, beginning 'Deepest and mightiest of our later Seers,' and there are several revolutionary 'hymns' to the tune of *A bas la Bourgeoisie* dating from the Commune, and the days when Mr. Allen read 'Songs before Sunrise,' charged with incendiary references to the 'Marseillaise' and the barricades.

Mr. Allen also crystallises his well-known revolutionary views on the marriage question in this quatrain :

'I hold that heart full poor that owns its boast
To throb in tune with but one throbbing breast.
Who numbers many friends, loves friendship most;
Who numbers many loves, loves each love best.'

And in 'Sunday Night at Mabille' he puts a daring social question with considerable force :

'You tell me we must shut our eyes to all
That turns this gaudy Mabille to a hell,
If we would keep our wives and daughters pure.
So be it: I know not. But if we must hold
So many hearts in anguish and despair,
So many lives that once were blithe and free
In tenfold slavery, to guard the rest
From some slight taint of ill; then, staring round
At all the hapless forms that crowd Mabille,
And knowing all that we have seen and said,
And feeling all this life in need of change,
One question ever rises to my lips,
One question that I scarcely dare to breathe:—
If woman's virtue cost so much to keep,
Good friend, is woman's virtue worth the price?'

CAREW would seem to have been the victim of a conspiracy of silence. His case is precisely the antithesis of Waller's. Waller has enjoyed considerably more fame than he deserved, Carew considerably less. As a poet he has been consistently belittled or ignored, as a man maligned. It has been considered sufficient to dismiss him in the same breath with Phineas Fletcher, Habington, Cleveland, and Suckling, as a 'Marinist,' an affected trifler, one of that school of fantastic euphuistic poets which flourished at the court of Charles I. To this injustice has been added that of regarding him as a licentious voluptuary, exclusively a maker of indecent song. At best he has been classed with one-poem poets like Suckling and Lovelace, whose collected works are merely so much oyster-shell enclosing those two famous pearls, the 'Ballad of a Wedding' and 'To Althea from Prison.' Nor has more recent criticism brought much compensation to Carew. Early in the century the forgotten critic Headley, and Nathan Drake, author of that delightful *mélange*, the 'Literary Hours,' —a critic who had a love for our 'old poets' rare in his day, and whose judgments upon them are singularly sound as well as sympathetic—both complained of this injustice to Carew. 'To say of Carew that he is superior to Waller,' wrote Drake, 'is saying nothing; for if every line of Waller were lost I know not that poetry would have much to lament.' And wrote Headley, 'Waller is too exclusively considered as the first man who brought versification to anything like its

Thomas Carew: Ebsworth's Edition.

present standard. Carew's pretensions to the same merit are seldom sufficiently either considered or allowed.' Yet Mr. Gosse, who is not wont 'to pour forgetfulness upon the dead,' in his exhaustive consideration of Waller's share in the history of the couplet, does not consider Carew's claims worth mentioning, and prefers instead to draw attention to 'the agonies and contortions' of one of his least successful poems, an elegy on the King of Sweden, which, after all, is no more agonised or contorted than poems on such themes were apt sometimes to be, even in the hands of that arch-eulogist and toady Waller himself. Archbishop Trench and Mr. Saintsbury, so far as I have noted, are the only latter-day critics who have given its due to what Mr. Saintsbury calls 'the miraculous art of Carew.' For, instead of Carew's poetry being characteristically euphuistic, licentious, trivial, and sporadic, the exact opposite is the truth. It is true that he has his concetti, like the other poets of his day, but they are relatively to the whole of his verse but a small proportion. His most famous poem, 'The Rapture,' is certainly as frank an utterance of amorous passion as any in the language, but its very frankness is its virtue; as Mr. Ebsworth well says, it is 'not a tenth part so vicious as are the sickly sentimental pruriencies and pruderies of our *fin de siècle* poets.' The humour of its almost Rabelaisian hyperbole keeps it healthy; it is lusty, but not lascivious, and I agree with Mr. Ebsworth (who, being a clergyman, may be trusted to look after our souls in the matter) that 'no one need feel injury or disgust' in the reading of it. And over and above the merry wicked-

ness of it, what truly 'miraculous art'! But though, doubtless owing to its subject, 'A Rapture' is the best known of Carew's poems, its theme is not by any means specially characteristic of its writer. A much graver, a more dignified, mood is more frequent with him, as in lofty 'Counsel to his Mistress' on the transitoriness of

> '. . . Beauty's flower,
> Which will away, and doth together
> Both bud and fade, both blow and wither';

and on the wisdom of gathering roses while she may, not with every chance flatterer, but with the true lover who will 'love for an age, not for a day,' for

> 'When beauty, youth, and all sweets leave her,
> Love may return, but lovers never.'

If one had to select one poem as representative of Carew it would not be 'The Rapture,' or such fancies as 'The Hue and Cry,' but rather the lovely lyric 'Disdain Returned,' which is well rid of its doubtfully authentic third verse:

> 'He that loves a rosy cheek,
> Or a coral lip admires,
> Or, from star-like eyes, doth seek
> Fuel to maintain his fires;
> As old Time makes these decay,
> So his flames must waste away.
>
> But a smooth and steadfast mind,
> Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
> Hearts with equal love combined,
> Kindle never-dying fires.
> Where these are not, I despise
> Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.'

Of course this is a familiar lyric in anthologies, but it

is curious that, well known as it is, it has not sufficed to keep green the memory of Carew as his one lyric keeps that of Lovelace, or 'Go, lovely rose,' that of Waller. It seems the more unfair, because Carew is not, as many of his contemporaries were, a one-poem poet. With a very slight deduction, his volume is good throughout. There are few pages on which one is not struck by something fine. Carew was an artist as well as a poet. If he in some slight degree misses the gay, artless charm of Suckling, he has a more serious attractiveness. There is a richness and dignity, likewise an intellectual force, in his verse which lifts him to the rank of a serious poet, and makes one regret that, with such natural gifts and artistic acquirements, he did not devote himself to poetry more continuously and of set purpose. For, to a considerable degree, he shared with Waller the gift of the stately line, and his verse has that body and glamour in which for the most part Waller's is deficient. There was indeed a drop of the ruddy Elizabethan blood in Carew. We recognise it in the poignancy of such lines as these:

> 'Thus parting, never more to touch,
> To let eternal absence in';

in the vividness of:

> 'The sacred hand of bright Eternity';

in the sensuous beauty of:

> 'Naked for gold their sacred bodies show';

(both lines from his stately Masque) or this of the nightingale:

> 'She winters and keeps warm her note'—

which reminds us that some of the Elizabethan love of nature yet lingered on in Carew.

It is interesting to remark incidentally that Burns once adapted a song of Carew's—the song beginning :

> 'Ask me why I send you here
> This firstling of the infant year?'

and I may here point out a curious parallel between his famous image of 'the guinea stamp' and these lines of Carew :

> 'To lead or brass, or some such bad
> Metal, a Prince's stamp may add
> That value which it never had ;
> But to the pure refined Ore
> The stamp of Kings imparts no more
> Worth, than the metal held before.'

As Burns knew one poem of Carew's it seems unlikely that he did not know this also. And here is a seventeenth-century motto for nineteenth century Socialism :

> 'For mark how few there are that share the world.'

Thomas Hardy : 'Life's Little Ironies.'

THERE is one fault in Mr. Hardy's work that still jars in his *Life's Little Ironies*, but which he can hardly be expected to eradicate, as it is temperamental — a certain slight coarseness of touch in his love-making. There is always something of the sensualist cad about his heroes. When they are not cads they are apt to be prigs, and his women and men alike

are always somewhat too obviously animal. It is not his occasional 'realism' of detail which gives one this impression, for it would not be difficult to point out writers who are more realistic in detail, but who do not give us this impression. And it would, indeed, be difficult to instance particular examples of what I mean. For it is rather a general pervading quality, an atmosphere, an accent. It seems simply an ingrained coarseness of touch, such as some men and women have, whom we cannot suffer to name certain matters, however reverent may be their intention; whereas others are at liberty to be as outspoken as they please. When Mr. Hardy's heroes make love I must confess to always feeling a little sick. There is something a little 'reechy' about their kisses.

Yet I don't feel squeamish when Mr. Meredith goes much further, as in the inflammatory scene between Richard Feverel and Mrs. Mount in the wonderful 'Enchantress' chapter. It is simply the difference of touch. No one can accuse Mr. Meredith's love-making of a lack of passion; no writer has insisted more on what one might call the beefsteak basis of the ideal; but, as he says of Lucy and Richard, if his lovers come down to earth they feel no less in heaven, and the point is that his readers also feel them to be in both places at once. We don't think of the beefsteak. In Mr. Hardy's novels we sometimes do. We do a little, I fear, in the exceedingly clever, ingeniously constructed, and powerfully-written story, *On the Western Circuit.* Once more we have Mr. Hardy's leading lady, a beautiful she-animal, with a passionate, pleasure-loving

nature, a certain veneer of culture, and a touch of imagination, pining in an uncongenial country town, with husband to match, and for whom the fact of a man having been able to seduce a woman in two days is an irresistible fascination.

In the present story she happens to be the mistress of the maid whom our fine gentleman has got into trouble. The maid has letters from her lover which she can neither read nor answer. The mistress undertakes to read and answer them for her, from an impulse half-kindly and half-romantic. As she puts her own passionate clever self into the poor maid's letters, the lover's passion takes a new lease of life at finding such unexpected qualities of mind in his rustic beauty. The result is that he marries her, with the inevitable disillusion, a *dénoûment* which, it seems to me, strikes rather a tragic than an 'ironic' note. He has one scene with the real writer of the letters, who has, of course, fallen desperately in love with her unknown correspondent. 'If it was all pure invention in those letters,' he said, emphatically, 'give me your cheek only. If you meant what you said, let it be lips.' 'Let it be lips'! There is something peculiarly Hardyish about the phrasing of 'let it be lips'; something that soils a beautiful situation. Why not 'give me your mouth,' 'kiss me on the mouth,' or some such honest and straightforward phrase? But 'let it be lips' betrays that flippancy which at such a moment always means grossness.

For all that, *On the Western Circuit* remains one of the best short stories Mr. Hardy has written. 'The

Fiddler of the Reels' is also an exceedingly powerful and fascinating story. But better than either is the group of stories classed together under the title of *A Few Crusted Characters*. The frame into which Mr. Hardy fits them, a sort of Wessex diligence, half carrier's cart and half omnibus, filled with market-day gossipers on their way home to Longpuddle, telling story for story, awakens a pleasant Chaucerian association, and Mr. Hardy manages his Longpuddle 'pilgrims' with great skill and sure characterisation.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes: 'Letters.'

In publishing Beddoes' fascinating letters Mr. Gosse completes a trust made by Beddoes' chief friend and devoted editor, Thomas Forbes Kelsall, to the late Robert Browning, and by him transferred to Mr. Gosse. In the memoir to his 1851 edition of 'Poems by the late Thomas Lovell Beddoes,' Kelsall made considerable use of these letters, but from regard to the feelings of Beddoes' cousin, Miss Zoë King, he reserved a large proportion, and withheld from the public the particularly important fact that Beddoes' death was not the result of accident, as he himself pretends in these letters, but suicide. Miss King died in 1881, and at length in 1890 the truth about Beddoes was made known to the world in Mr. Gosse's 'Temple' edition of the 'Poetical Works' —to the perhaps somewhat small but wise world which interests itself in this curiously morbid anchorite and

exquisite lyrical genius. In the present volume Mr. Gosse presents that wise little world with a complete edition of the letters, which enables us to form a more realisable conception of their writer than has been possible heretofore. Especially do they help us to conceive his intense, almost misanthropic, absorption in intellectual matters; and, on the other hand, they surprise us by a cheerfulness, sometimes even an hilarity, of tone, which one had not expected of such an inveterate 'creeper into worm-holes': for certainly no writer has so lived up to the couplet of the melancholic Burton—a whimsical figure of scholastic seclusion not unlike Beddoes himself:

> 'All my joys to this are folly;
> Nought so sweet as melancholy.'

To their literary interest Mr. Swinburne, as long ago as 1875, paid tribute, speaking of Beddoes' 'noble instinct for poetry,' and declaring that his 'brilliant correspondence on poetical questions gives to me a higher view of his fine and vigorous intelligence than any other section of his literary remains.' The literature in which we find Beddoes most interested includes, as we should have expected, the poetry of Shelley (of whom he was one of the earliest and most devoted poetical disciples), the Elizabethan drama, the German romantic revival, with especial reference to Goethe, Schiller, and Tieck; but even more interesting are the numerous references to his English contemporaries, such as Darley, Moultrie, and Barry Cornwall, and to his own poetical hopes and fears. One of his schoolfellows has described his enunciation in the reading of poetry as 'offensively

conceited,' but there is certainly little of offensive conceit in the expression of his literary aspirations as set forth in these letters. His estimate of his own powers is consistently low, even contemptuous, and his mood is ever that best artistic mood of humility before the great masters. 'I hardly venture to open my manuscript,' he writes in one place from his German hermitage; 'I read Shakespeare and Wordsworth, the only English books I have here, and doubt—and seem to myself a very Bristol diamond, not genuine, altho' glittering just enough to be sham.' And again, in the same letter, *à propos* of the erratically growing *Death's Jest Book*:

'This indifference is of itself almost enough to convince me that my nature is not that of one, who is destined to atchieve [*sic*] anything very important in this department of literature; another is a sort of very moderate somewhat contemptuous respect for the profession of a mere poet in our inky age. You will conceive that such a feeling accords well with, and perhaps results from a high delight in, first-rate creators and illustrators of the creation as Æschylus, Shak., etc., and a cordial esteem for those who, as highly polished moderns, have united their art with other solid knowledge and science, or political activity—Camoens, Dante, and, lower down, many French and English accomplished rhymers; —and now Goethe, Tieck, etc.

'In the third place a man must have an exclusive passion for his art, and all the obstinacy and self-denial wh: is combined with such a temperament, an unconquerable and all-enduring will always working forwards to the only goal he knows; such a one must never think that there is any human employment so good (much less suspect that there may be not a few better), so honourable for the exercise of his faculties, ambition, industry— and all those impolitic and hasty virtues which helped Icarus to buckle on his plumes and wh we have left sticking in the pages of Don Quixote.'

This desire to be Cæsar or nothing soon impelled Beddoes to the alternative study of medicine, to

which also his preoccupation with the horrible in human constitution, the death's head and bloody bones aspect of death, may not unlikely have attracted him. In several places, too, he discusses in an extremely interesting way the advantages to imaginative creation accruing from the systematic study of some exact science. 'Even as a dramatist,' he says, 'I cannot help thinking that the study of anatomy, physiology, psychology, and anthropology applied to and illustrated by history, biography, and works of imagination is that which is most likely to assist one in producing correct and masterly delineations of the passions: great light would be thrown on Shakespeare by the commentaries of a person so educated.' Of his many admirable references to the Elizabethan drama it is impossible here to take more than passing note. Referring to the state of the drama in his own day, he says, in a vigorous passage which will doubtless be already known to the reader, 'Say what you will, I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow, no creeper into worm-holes —no reviser even—however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold. . . . Just now the drama is a haunted ruin.' Coming from one who was himself one of the most notable, so to say, of literary ghouls, this passage speaks much for a breadth of literary judgment which no consideration of his own personal predilection could warp. It is interesting, too, to note that Beddoes by no means shared in the contempt with which many purely literary dramatists look down upon the stage. On the contrary, he considers it 'the highest aim of the

dramatist, and should be very desirous to get on it. To look down on it is a piece of impertinence as long as one chooses to write in the form of a play.' To the work of his contemporaries Beddoes shows himself exceptionally sympathetic. To Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth he looked up as to masters whom he despaired of approaching, and there was not a 'new man' with whose work he does not seem to have been familiar. He was, apparently, one of the earliest readers of Praed, and his admiration for Darley, whose fanciful and essentially poetic genius has many points of resemblance to his own, is continually finding expression. 'I am glad that you are awakening to a sense of Darley,' he writes to Kelsall; 'he must have no little perseverance to have gone through so much of that play—it will, perchance, be the first star of a new day.' 'Darley,' he writes again, 'is a tallish, slender, pale, light-eyebrowed, gentle-looking bald-pate, in a brown surtout, with a duodecimo under his arm, stammering to a most provoking degree, so much so as to be almost inconversible.' In the same letter we get this characteristic glimpse of Peacock: 'Peacock has married a Welsh turtle, and is employed at present in devising inextinguishable lanterns: which he puffs at with a pair of bellows.' Of particular interest is that part of the correspondence which relates to the publication of the 1824 volume of Shelley's 'Posthumous Poems.' Barry Cornwall, Kelsall, and Beddoes had agreed to give practical sign of their devotion to Shelley by sharing the expense of an edition of 250 copies, to be printed by

John Hunt. John Hunt, however, wanted to publish 500 copies, and the dismay and scorn with which Beddoes receives the suggestion are full of instruction for those critics who have so much to say about our contemporary minor poets and their limited editions. That Shelley should sell an edition of more than 250 is evidently regarded by him as sheer impossibility. 'For the twinkling of this very distant chance we three poor honest admirers of Shelley's poetry are certainly to pay.' 'Are not Simpkin and Marshall,' he pertinently asks, 'now selling the remainder of Ollier's 250 copies of his best poems at a reduction of seventy per cent.?' —'no doubt,' Mr. Gosse suggests, 'the 1820 edition of *Prometheus Unbound*.'

In fine passages, such purple patches as we find in the letters of Keats, these letters are not conspicuously rich, though not quite deficient. An utterance on Shakespeare, in a letter to Barry Cornwall, may be quoted as an example: 'About Shakespeare you don't say enough. He was an incarnation of nature; and you might just as well attempt to remodel the seasons and the laws of life and death as to alter "one jot or tittle" of his eternal thoughts.' Beddoes' correspondents are but four—Kelsall, Barry Cornwall, Revell Phillips, and an unnamed 'relative'—but, with the exception of half a dozen or so, the letters are all to Kelsall. They are spread over twenty-five years, from his lodging in Devereux Court in 1824, to his hospital at Basel in 1849. Mr. Gosse has edited them with devotion, and supplied a few notes. Has he not, however, made a slip in note twenty-four, which pertains to a passage in the letters

which runs, 'My tragedy goes on slowly,' etc., and which Mr. Gosse annotates—'The beginning, it would seem, of what ultimately became *Death's Jest Book*'? But this cannot be, as the letter in question was written by Barry Cornwall, and included in the present collection because Cornwall and Beddoes being together at the time, their two letters to Kelsall were despatched under the same cover.

Grant Allen: 'Post-Prandial Philosophy.'

THERE is, I have somewhere read, a 'fresco' in Salt Lake City which depicts the great prophet Joseph Smith descending the mount of inspiration, after the manner of Moses, with the Book of Mormon in his hand, and wearing a frock-coat and silk hat! Now whether this be fact or fiction, there is a moral in the story; which is, that plainly we have got to get used to our latter-day prophets wearing frock-coat and silk hat. The days of insignia are, for the present, gone by. 'If greatness be, it wears no outer sign.' The temper of the age is against symbolism—save that of the military,—and to wear such flummery as a masonic 'apron,' even, dare one suggest, the apron of the Church, or badge or ribbon of any kind, is simply to blazon one's lack of humour. There is in this a loss of picturesqueness, no doubt, and personally I agree with Mr. Stevenson in liking the heroic to wear 'its bit of bunting.' But, maybe, there is a gain in sincerity. When a man wears

the uniform of the heroic, we expect him to be heroic —but heroism, so to speak, in its working-clothes, religion without the surplice, greatness without the toga: that delights us, that preserves the precious element of surprise. To do a great thing with a careless turn of the wrist, and pretend it is nothing, is better—though the dangers of affectation are obvious—than to do it with a self-conscious flourish and a self-satisfied kiss of the hand.

Nothing could be more typical of the contrast between old and new than Mr. Grant Allen's method in the delightful *Post-Prandial Philosophy*, which he has very properly reprinted from the *Westminster Gazette*. Here we have the prophet without his mantle with a vengeance. Instead of Sinai we have the after-dinner table, instead of the stern 'rock-face' of a Moses we have the genial, humorous smile of one's host, and in fact the only exterior resemblance which Mr. Allen bears to the typical prophet is the eagerness which his opponents manifest in the matter of stones. Yet for all this absence of professional toggery, Mr. Allen's essays, at the laziest end of the day too, deal with matters at least as important as the majority of those touched upon in the Law of Moses. Moses had but one people to take into account; Mr. Allen has not merely a score or so to reckon with, but a cosmos into the bargain. The cosmos makes all the difference in the modern man's view as compared with his predecessor's. Ultimately it is the cosmos which accounts for the decay of pontificals and other forms of swagger. How can a man who has realised the importance of the planet Jupiter play such fantastic

tricks before high heaven as, say, those of the Royal Order of Foresters? It is the cosmos that is at the bottom of the New Humour. Man cannot, dare not, take himself so seriously as he has been accustomed to do. Hence such phrases as 'immortal fame,' 'deathless renown,' and so on, begin to drop out of use on a planet, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes once graphically put it, with 'a core of fire and a crust of fossils.'

Of course, this attitude has its danger, as Mr. Benson has reminded us. In remembering that 'man is small,' we may forget that 'man is great' also. But this Mr. Allen never does. He is none the less a serious because he is a laughing philosopher. He realises that it is quite possible, and much more convincing, for a man to be serious and gay at the same time, and that ponderosity is another thing from weight. But indeed this has been the method of the most successful teachers of all times. They have invited you to laugh with them, so that you might remain to pray. Mr. Allen's method, indeed, is often to encourage you to laugh at him for a start, as in his most ingenious chat on 'The Celtic Fringe.' 'We Celts henceforth,' he plumps down one of his forty-overproof absolutes, 'will rule the roost in Britain.' At once, of course, there is a hearty guffaw from his Saxon audience at the bare absurdity of the thing, which, however, gives place to curiosity as to how he will contrive to work it out.

Why not? he begins, immediately fastening on. You say that all the Celts in Britain are conquered races. But are they? Who has conquered them? Did the Romans, to start with? Had they not to rest content

with the subjugation of the south-eastern counties of England — which, by the way, *have* been conquered over and over again—and were compelled to leave the Cornish, the Welsh, the North-Englanders, the Scotch, and the Irish comparatively unsubdued. And these extremities of the British Empire have remained in varying degrees alien and unconquered to the present time, in spite of an obvious measure of absorption and fraternisation. That Ireland has never been finally conquered is obvious. 'Glendower's rebellion, Richmond's rebellion, the Wesleyan revolt, the Rebecca riots, the tithe war, are all continuous parts of the ceaseless reaction of gallant little Wales against Teutonic aggression. "An alien Church" still disturbs the "Principality." Has not Scotland its crofters, and are there not Home Rule movements in the air for all three "nations"?'

'Ay, and we've got the money too!' Mr. Allen retorts to your incredulous moneyed smile. Once England's wealth was in her agriculture. That was the day of the lowland Teuton. Now it is her industries which happen to have their chief centres 'in the Celtic or semi-Celtic area.' 'The Highlander and the Irishman swarm into Glasgow; the Irishman and the Welshman swarm into Liverpool; the West-countryman into Bristol; Celts of all types into London, Southampton, Newport, Birmingham, and Sheffield.' Nor is it for nothing that so many of the men who are 'doing something' bear Celtic names, 'that the London Socialists should be led by Welshmen like William Morris, or by the eloquent brogue of Bernard Shaw's audacious

oratory.' In short, the Celts 'are marching to-day, all abreast, to the overthrow of feudalism.' No doubt some of those stoners of the prophets will come along and say that all this is specious slapdash, and that I am easily taken in. And, of course, Mr. Allen is just a little cocksure. But then his method of vivid exposition does not admit of fine shades. All he is concerned to throw on to the sheet are the main lines of the problems with which he deals, with a really startling, a 'cosmic' grasp. Think what a clearness of conception, what a mastery of literary expression and illustration, it means to be able in eight or ten pages to deal, far from superficially but invariably striking bedrock, with topics of such breadth of range and world-wide significance as those which for the most part Mr. Allen takes for his themes: the big, ever-enduring, ever-changing problems of the relations of races, nations, societies, sexes, and individuals. And all discussed with such bonhomie, such playful humour, such grace, and sometimes even beauty of expression. Slight as these essays seem (for the slightness is only in the seeming), they form, I almost think, the most important book Mr. Allen has given us. They are all the more dangerous to 'the vested interests' and 'the monopolist instincts' for this very apparent slightness. They are, so to speak, mustard-seeds of 'the new spirit,' which are more likely to result in mighty trees than many more ambitious-looking sowings — pellets of philosophical dynamite admirably contrived for the waistcoat pocket.

MR. SWINBURNE'S *Astrophel and other Poems* is in every way a typical Swinburne volume: in its beauties as in its flaws, in its magic and in its monotony, in its marvellous wealth of words and inexhaustible metrical vitality, in its great distinction of style, and its bewildering lack of concrete poetic material, and in its fine imaginativeness side by side with a curious poverty of invention. However great a poet's genius may be in other ways, his work cannot but suffer greatly by a lack of invention, for thus it loses that infinite variety, that perpetual slight novelty which it is the business of invention to impart. Actually lack of invention in poetry means lack of fancy, and indeed it would perhaps be impossible to name another poet who has had at once so great a gift of imagination and so meagre a gift of fancy as Mr. Swinburne. This is the reason why much of his poetry is so hard to read. It is not so much his lack of thought, for not infrequently his thought is profound, as his lack of fancy. Surely no poet that ever lived has possessed so slender a supply of analogies. Of all the myriad similitudes that are sown broadcast across the world, Mr. Swinburne seems to have observed scarcely more than half a dozen. Flowers and flames, suns and seas, stars and tides: whatever his theme, to these and one or two more such primary facts of nature is he restricted for his imagery. Never was poetry so little nourished on observation of the details of life; though one gladly admits that in the use of this strangely restricted palette Mr. Swinburne has indeed worked

A. C. Swinburne: 'Astrophel,' etc.

miracles. Perhaps poetry (not even Shelley's) never came so near to being sheer aspiration of the soul, or emotion of the senses, as Mr. Swinburne's. It is often more like great violin-playing than poetry. Sometimes even it suggests a metronome, for the verses seem like mere metrical schemes, diagrams of rhythm, though very wonderful as such.

But I always hold it somewhat impertinent in a mere critic thus to look the gift horse poetry in the mouth. I shall never be able to repay Mr. Swinburne for *Atalanta*, not to speak of *Songs before Sunrise*, and *Tristram*. Who am I, or any reader, that we should point out the specks in these windfalls from the Hesperides? Surely it befits us better to shut our eyes and open our mouths, and take gratefully what it pleases the gods to give us.

The title, *Astrophel*, is one peculiarly appropriate to Mr. Swinburne, more appropriate even than to him to whose 'Sidneian showers of sweet discourse' our poet pays his tribute of impassioned praise. For Shelley and Swinburne are both Astrophels as no other English poet has been; 'the desire of the moth for the star' is the one passion of their work. In *Astrophel* Mr. Swinburne commemorates a reading of 'Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia in the Garden of an Old English Manor House':

> 'The flowers of the sun that is sunken
> Hang heavy of heart as of head;
> The bees that have eaten and drunken
> The soul of their sweetness are fled;
> But a sunflower of song, on whose honey
> My spirit has fed as a bee,
> Makes sunnier than morning was sunny
> The twilight for me.'

The poem thrills with that noble reverence for the great work of other poets which is one of Mr. Swinburne's finest traits. It vibrates, too, with his fine love of England, thus adding one more to

> 'The books of the praise and thanksgiving
> Of Englishmen dead.'

In 'England: An Ode,' he lets loose all his wonderful lyrical frenzy, inspired by the same great theme, and the ode would be notable were it only for these three splendid lines:

'All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's voice and Nelson's hand,
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our chosen and chainless land,
Bear us witness: come the world against her, England yet shall stand.'

The volume is as typical in the themes as in the quality of its contents. Almost every kind of poetry with which we associate Mr. Swinburne is represented. In 'A Swimmer's Dream' we have one more celebration of our poet's passion for the sea:

> 'A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
> A peace more happy than lives on land,
> Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
> The dreaming head and the steering hand.
> I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
> The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
> And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
> And wish the wheel of the world would stand.'

We have odes, inscriptions, elegies, threnodies, Scots and Jacobite ballads, pictures of the South Coast, memorial verses to brother poets and friends (Browning,

Tennyson, Sir Richard Burton, Philip Marston, and, one is glad to find, Bell Scott), pantheistic nature poems and fierce political sonnets. Seldom has Mr. Swinburne been more scathing than in this arraignment of the Church of Rome, sung above the tomb of Giordano Bruno:

'Cover thine eyes and weep, O child of hell,
Grey spouse of Satan, Church of name abhorred.
Weep, withered harlot, with thy weeping lord,
Now none will buy the heaven thou hast to sell
At price of prostituted souls, and swell
Thy loveless list of lovers. Fire and sword
No more are thine: the steel, the wheel, the cord,
The flames that rose round living limbs, and fell
In lifeless ash and ember, now no more
Approve thee godlike. Rome, redeemed at last
From all the red pollution of thy past,
Acclaims the grave bright face that smiled of yore
Even on the fire that caught it round and clomb
To cast its ashes on the face of Rome.'

This is worthy of *Songs before Sunrise*, but still worthier of Mr. Swinburne's splendid youth of song is the fine mystical celebration of the nature-passion, entitled *A Nympholept*, from which I must find space for a brief extract:

'An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers aglow,
Breathe and brighten about me: the darkness gleams,

The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes below,
Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like dreams;
The silence thrills with the whispers of secret streams
That well from the heart of the woodland: there I know
Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with showers and beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun
Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers: mine eyes
Close, and the goal of delight and life is one:
No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.'

Seldom has that veritable nympholepsy which nature induces in us in certain bounteous summer moods found such rapturous expression.

'The Bard of the Dimbovitza': Second Series.

No one who read the first series of these remarkable Roumanian poems, and who found in them, to quote the words of one of their translators, 'a real treasure-trove, a valuable addition to the literature of the world,' will need any introduction to this more than welcome second series, a collection which is no less remarkable than the first. Such readers will know the story of the straits to which the young Roumanian poet, Mdlle. Vacaresco, has been put to gather these jealously guarded songs: how she has lain eavesdropping in the maize at reaping-time to catch the singing of the reapers; how she has been obliged to learn spinning with the village girls to hear those spinning songs which they are said to improvise, now one taking up

the theme and now another, an instinctive art which an acquaintance with English peasantry hardly helps one to comprehend.

In the present collection Mdlle. Vacaresco has drawn from the same sources, with the same wonderful results. The themes of these new poems, as of those of the first series, are the great elemental emotions and passions of humanity, and the *dramatis personæ* the simple primary types, old as the world and yet ever new—love and motherhood, war and the anguish and terror of death, and all the varied tragedy that comes of the blending of these poignant motives. That pessimism need be no artificial product of morbid conditions and too much philosophy is amply illustrated by the dark melancholy which is the prevailing mood of these poems. Never were poems so interpenetrated with the sense of tears in mortal things, with the painful burden of the hard lot of man; and not only the tears, but the terrors that encompass it about. I am acquainted with no poetry in which death and the fear of death is so persistent a motive. There is hardly a single poem in which the grave is not somewhere mentioned; and not merely as symbolical of death, but as a concrete sentient terror, personified as an ever-watchful and malignant being lying in wait for its prey.

'From out my window one can see the graves—and on my life
The graves, too, keep a watch,'

runs one of those haunting refrains which, though at first sight they may seem to have little relation to the poems in which they occur, are usually seen on con-

sideration to be most artistically allusive; and again we have this curious example:

'I will pass away into death, if thou let me die,
And never betray the place of my burial to thee;
Thou shalt ask the paths: "Which way doth lead to his gravestone?"
And other men's graves shall answer thee aloud:
"We are not his grave."'

In fact, these Roumanian peasants would seem to live in the very valley of the shadow. Yet along with this terror of the grave there is a curious familiarity with it, that strange *camaraderie* between the living and the dead which one finds in somewhat primitive peoples. And still more curious is the blending of the conceptions of the grave and the genial earth-mother which we find in these lines from a 'Dirge of a Mother over her Son':

'What will the seeds be saying,
Thou didst intrust to Earth,
When they come forth and find thee here no more?
Beneath thy casement, see, the maidens pass,
The river passeth too;
And on the morrow is a festival;
Hast told thy grave thereof?
Perchance, if thou hadst told it,
The grave had left thee to enjoy the Day
For that one day.
And didst thou tell thy grave thou hadst a mother?
For she, the mother of all flowers and harvests,
Had surely felt some pity.'

After death, the most frequent motive in these poems is the passion of motherhood, far before even love or patriotic warfare. The reader will remember the wonderful dramatic vignette of a barren woman in the first series. The same hard dry yearning finds terrible

and, if possible, more poignant expression in a poem entitled 'Stillborn' in the present volume, and the reader will notice the 'grave' motive once more strangely introduced:

'Woman! take up thy life once more
Where thou hast left it;
Nothing is changed for thee, thou art the same,
Thou, who didst think
That all things would be wholly changed for thee.
No dirge doth echo through thy dwelling-place;
One cannot mourn as dead
That which hath never lived.
Yet had I made for him a dirge so sweet!
Telling therein, that he was all thy hope,
And that he did not well
To go ere he had looked upon the world—
To think so ill of what he ne'er had seen.
Woman! while thou didst bear him, hast thou ever
Told him of graves? or spoken of the sorrow of barren wombs?
Didst thou not tell him of thy womb's rejoicing over his life?
And that spring sometimes comes upon this earth,
And that some souls there are that do remember?
Nay, thou didst think on sorrow
While thou hadst joy within thee;
And sorrow frightened him.
Toward thy husband stretch thou forth thy hand
With gentle smile, that he
May smile again, and think of Death no more.
For Death it was not
That passed through this thy house—but it was Life
That would not take up her abode therein.'

Mr. Swinburne and others have written a great deal, and rightly, in eulogy of Tennyson's 'Rizpah'; but where Tennyson struck one chord of motherhood, the unknown poets of these wonderful songs strike every

chord. In another poem we find the double tragedy of childlessness for husband as for wife expressed with a most vivid and pathetic simplicity. A man stands contemplating the furrows of his field, already shooting up green blades, and as he looks upon the young life he has a vision of his 'dream-children' that may never be:

'Some shoots already were breaking forth from the furrows.
And said: "We, we are born!"
Then did I envy my field for its fatherhood.'

Like a sun of joy his dream-child shone before him:

'But the real sun sank down beneath the furrows.
And I seemed to myself the father of my sorrow,
And of my loneliness.
These to my hut I carried back to me,
And to my wife I spake:
"Wife, we are all alone and full of sorrow!"
Silent was she, for she knew not how to answer;
Silent were both our hearts, for they were empty.
Then of all loneliness, and pain, and sorrow
I felt myself the father—
The son of the graves I felt myself, and the husband
Of yon dumb woman, whose womb would be silent ever,
As were our hearts.
Then, that we might forget, we looked at the furrows,
All full of seed—and some shoots already were breaking
Forth from the furrows, and said: "We, we are born!"
Nor did one of us ask the other: "Whereon art thou looking?"—
We only looked at the growing seeds together.'

What a world of pathos is expressed in this last simple line! This sentiment of parentage seems to precede every other. Is it to be accounted for by the fact that in such a country as Roumania the need of offspring to turn into patriots will be paramount? Inversely, we

find the love of a child for its mother expressed in similarly passionate symbol.

'I bade my mother's soul to wait
Beside the well for me'

grimly opens a poem entitled 'The Orphan'; and later on it continues:

'And I shall ask: "How is it in the grave?"
Then shall I see her image, in the well,
With finger on its lip.
And I shall ask her: "Dost thou yearn for me?"
Then shall I see her image in the well
Drying its eyes:
And in her girdle I shall see the flowers,
Yea, all the flowers I cast upon her grave.
And nothing will she say to me, but I shall feel her glance.'

I have referred to the personification of the grave, but though the most striking of all, that is but one example of the artistic rule of these poems. Indeed, everything, objective, subjective, and in any way realisable, is thus personified; a characteristic taking us back to that primitive time when man had not yet differentiated himself from his environment, and when he looked upon every natural object as sentient, as capable of wielding an influence and giving an opinion as himself. Thus when a maiden, desiring the moonbeams and the wavelets of the river for a necklace, has contented herself with threading one of the tears of men:

'All the tears
Thus whispered low together, and did say:
"Whence art thou, sister, from what heart dost thou come?"
Then each one told the grief that did befall
Her parent heart, and each one thought herself
Saddest of all.'

And even so impalpable an abstraction as the sign of the cross is personified, where the soldier going forth to battle comforts his bride by saying that even

> 'The sign of the cross that thou mad'st o'er me
> Will be glad to go forth to die.'

The humblest objects are thus endowed with humanity:

> 'At the tree's foot a hay-fork hath been left,
> And all day long it hears the birds a-singing.'

And not only a house, but every part thereof, threshold, window, and door, is gifted with separate personality. A very dramatic example is that of the two knives of a murderer talking together as they hang on the wall:

> 'When in the chamber night is black,
> I hear the knives that talk together.
> One saith: "'Twas I that pierced the wife";
> The other: "I that killed the husband."
> Saith one: "Such lukewarm blood had she,
> Like eggs beneath the mother's wing!"
> The other: "Such red blood had he,
> As red as wine in glass!"

And finally, not Keats himself has conceived a more tender image of the moon than this of a maiden's heart, bereft of the love that once warmed it, and pitied by the whole world for its loss—an image recalling Sidney's famous sonnet:

> 'The rivers say, when she appears:
> "O little maid's pale heart,
> Come, rest in us!" and in their sleep
> The birds all say to her:
> "Come, go to sleep in our nests with us!
> The grave saith: "Maiden's heart,

Pale heart, make me grow paler too!"
And everything to slumber turns,
That so that heart may sleep.
Yet though she see them slumb'ring all,
She slumbers not, nor nods her head,
But stands and watches Sleep.'

Perfect expression such as this, in conjunction with conception, now so naïvely primitive and anon so startlingly 'modern,' makes one wonder how much more than that of eavesdropper in the maize has been Mdlle. Vacaresco's share in these marvellous poems, and how much more than that of mere translators the shares of Miss Alma Strettell and Queen 'Carmen Sylva.'

Eugene Lee-Hamilton: Sonnets, etc.

My acquaintance with Mr. Eugene Lee-Hamilton's poetry began in 1882, when he published his striking volume *The New Medusa and Other Poems.* Years after I picked up his earlier volume, *Gods, Saints, and Men* (1880)—what a fine title!—in Booksellers' Row—a volume which, though steeped in the influences of the 'æsthetic' romanticism of the time, and though full of the crudities, even absurdities, of youthful exaggeration, yet arrested one by its ferment of distempered imagination. Then came the very fine volume of *Imaginary Sonnets*, in which Mr. Lee-Hamilton plainly showed that he was rapidly gaining firm artistic control of his poetic gifts. His next book, *The Fountain*

of Youth, was a disappointing return to the worn-out themes of romanticism, the *elixir vitæ*, necromancy, etc., and, though containing fine things, read like a boyish work revived. Once more he returns within the salutary bounds of the sonnet, a form over which he has considerable mastery. Some thirty of these hundred *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* have been printed before, but the remainder are new. A good many of the previously printed ones I have already seen as they appeared, for Mr. Lee-Hamilton's sonnets are worth keeping a look-out for. Two on 'The Death of Puck' especially I have never forgotten. They appeared two or three years ago in the *Academy*; and I looked for them again first thing on opening Mr. Lee-Hamilton's very pretty volume. Here they are—for the reader who has yet to make Mr. Lee-Hamilton's acquaintance could not have a better introduction:

I

'I fear that Puck is dead—it is so long
Since men last saw him—dead with all the rest
Of that sweet elfin crew that made their nest
In hollow nuts, where hazels sing their song;

Dead, and for ever, like the antique throng
The elves replaced; the Dryad that you guessed
Behind the leaves; the Naiad weed-bedressed;
The leaf-eared Faun that loved to lead you wrong.

"Tell me, thou hopping Robin, hast thou met
A little man, no bigger than thyself,
Whom they call Puck, where woodland bells are wet?"

"Tell me, thou Wood-Mouse, hast thou seen an elf
Whom they call Puck, and is he seated yet,
Capped with a snail-shell, on his mushroom shelf?"

II

The Robin gave three hops, and chirped, and said:
"Yes, I knew Puck, and loved him; though I trow
He mimicked oft my whistle, chuckling low;
Yes, I knew cousin Puck; but he is dead.

We found him lying on his mushroom bed—
The Wren and I—half covered up with snow,
As we were hopping where the berries grow.
We think he died of cold. Ay, Puck is fled."

And then the Wood-Mouse said: "We made the Mole
Dig him a little grave beneath the moss,
And four big Dormice placed him in the hole.

The Squirrel made with sticks a little cross;
Puck was a Christian elf, and had a soul;
And all we velvet jackets mourn his loss."'

What a thrill of pleasure it gives one to see something done quite perfectly! Darley, that most exquisite of the poets of fairyland, could not have done this better. An age that loves its poetry to 'grapple with' 'problems' may call this cherry-stone carving; but how easy it would be to write an 'epic,' say, on the woman question, compared with writing these two sonnets. This gift for writing fairy poetry is a very rare one, and seldom bestowed. Even Tennyson, whom one would have expected to have possessed it in an exceptional degree, quite missed it: witness 'The Foresters.' His fairies have pretty enough lyrics to sing, but they are only superior pantomime fairies, imitated from *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Tennyson had never seen them dancing 'in the ghost's moonshine,' as such poets as Darley and Beddoes saw

them, as Mr. W. B. Yeats sees them, or Mr. Lee-Hamilton—though here, had I space, I would pause to note that there is a marked national distinction to be observed between the English and the Celtic fairies. The latter seem more immaterial, more mythological; the English more at home and familiar with one, more human. Mr. Lee-Hamilton's are, I think, English fairies. They are simple wood things rather than spirits of the air.

But the fairies are but one of Mr. Lee-Hamilton's many interests, and for his readers, I think, the chief interest of his volume will be in himself, in the autobiographical glimpses he gives us of the weary tragedy of his life, in such poems as those contained in the section, 'A Wheeled Bed.' To one who ponders these, this little volume with the terrible title will come to mean more than the latest poetical product of a poet with an unmistakable touch of genius; it will become a sacred little symbol of human suffering and fortitude, a lachrymatory of bitter but precious tears—and no generous heart can read it without a personal thankfulness that Mr. Lee-Hamilton, though cruelly denied so many of the blessings of existence, has yet been left one priceless gift, 'to sweetly interpose a little ease'—his real gift of song. Mr. Lee-Hamilton expresses the boon of this compensation in the following moving sonnet:

> 'I think the Fairies to my christening came:
> But they were wicked sprites, and envious elves,
> Who brought me gall, as bitter as themselves,
> In tiny tankards wrought with fairy flame.

They wished me love of books—each little dame—
With power to read no book upon my shelves;
Fair limbs—for palsy;—Dead Sea fruits by twelves
And every bitter blessing you can name.

But one good Elf there was; and she let fall
A single drop of Poesy's wine of gold
In every little tankard full of gall:

So year by year, as woes and pains grow old,
The little golden drop is in them all;
But bitterer is the cup than can be told.'

R. K. Leather: 'Verses.'

MR. LEATHER'S verse has eccentricities, which those who find eccentricity a trouble will probably stumble at; but they are mainly on the right side. That is, they are in the direction of compression, not of effusion, and for that one can rarely be too thankful in a book of modern verse.

His volume barely reaches eighty-seven pages, and that with the help of sub-titles and pages which contain nothing larger than a quatrain, and even now and again a couplet. But a quatrain like this is worth more than some pages. It is entitled 'Hic Jacet':

'At six, he put a seedling in the mould;
And sat beneath its shade when he was old:
And still beneath it lies, now he is dead:
And over him each year its leaves are shed.'

The epigrammatic compression here is very characteristic of Mr. Leather's work, for he possesses the

rare gift of austerity. He scorns the flourish of unnecessary ornament, as all self-respecting poets do; and, consequently, there is hardly one of his poems which does not possess that logical structure that only comes of conscientiously suiting the word to the action. He has one or two eccentricities, I said. One is a preference for the unrhymed lyric, which, however, he shares with poets such as Matthew Arnold and Coventry Patmore. Another is his occasional practice of capitalising his verses by sentences, as one would in prose — many lines thus beginning with a small letter. That was one of Mrs. Browning's fads too, though I am glad Mr. Leather does not share her heresy for assonance. As an example of Mr. Leather's experiments in this manner, as also of a quaint humour which gives a pervading robustness to his verse, I quote his 'Advice to a Boy':

'Boy, should you meet a pretty wench
unseen, alone, at twilight hour,
ask not her name;
for on the crowded street at noon
she ill could brook the glare and gaze,
and Jack and Bill would call her plain,
and it were nothing but a dream,
and you would wake.

Ask no forget-me-not, nor name
a trysting-place, for she will change,
and you will change:
but if upon your memory
no single detail you imprint,
perchance will come into your mind
her witchery all unawares,
at twilight hour.'

But his verse has other qualities besides austerity and quaintness. It has that bloom which only comes of imagination, and that music which only comes of lyric inspiration. Who will deny those qualities to 'The Bridal of the Night'?

'The shadows of the kingly Night
Come through the dark east wall,
Where flits a pale and shrouded light
Between dark columns, left and right,
Exceeding tall.

The beams and shadows of the Night
Troop thro' his high wide hall;
All round—beneath the mazy flight
Of starry lamps—spun fine and white,
Cloud-draperies fall.

Behold the melancholy Night
In his glimmering bridal hall!
He dances in the darkling light,
And bitter sad is the dusky wight,
And wondrous tall.

The Moon is dancing with the Night;
She floats through his ebon hall,
Leaned back on his shoulder in delight;
On her lovely face all ivory-bright
Dark kisses fall.

The moonbeams and the shades of Night
To each other sing and call;
And they follow the Moon in her noiseless flight
To her cloudy bed with the kingly Night
Thro' the dark west wall.'

The satisfaction of this poem is that the figures have evidently been clearly seen, not vaguely groped after, by the poet; they are as definite in line and character as a painting, and their very vividness deepens the glamour of the profound background.

'A PERSONALITY,' defines the imaginary disputant in Mr. Davidson's *A Random Itinerary*, 'is a man whose presence is power.' Mr. Davidson, then, is primarily a personality He is not merely an embodied talent, or a genius whose entire significance is in some hidden corner of his brain. The whole of him counts. He is a personality as well as a poet. Take up any one of his books, and before you have had time to differentiate its qualities you are aware of a masculine authoritative presence. There is a burliness of constitution underlying his most delicate fanciful work. Its beauty is that best beauty which is the blossom of robust deep-rooted health; and its sweetness is that sweetness which is hived in the hearts of strong men. This background of manhood gives Mr. Davidson a unique significance among the younger men. There is not another among them of whom it can be said. I do not intend to impute unmanliness to the others. My meaning is, that they are, I think, poets without being personalities as well. They suggest no such liberal strength as Mr. Davidson's least perfect work always suggests. Perhaps it is that they lack the courage to be imperfect; though, indeed, when they venture on imperfection we cry out at once. I may be wrong, but at any rate, speaking for myself, Mr. Davidson is one of the few living writers whom one can allow to nod occasionally with untroubled faith. There is nothing more significant to a writer than the humour in which one takes his lapses. Take

John Davidson: **His Writings generally.**

Borrow for example: what literary Moses can hold us so long in the wilderness without a grumble? So, in a measure, with Mr. Davidson: we know the manna is sure to fall sooner or later, and never lose faith in the promised land to which, in the form of a *magnum opus*, I have little doubt Mr. Davidson is leading us.

Another significant characteristic of Mr. Davidson's work is its romantic temper. Though evidences of a keen modern mind crop up constantly throughout, the logical substructure of a fearless thinker, yet, instead of introducing discord, they add intensity of tone to the prevalent impression of fantasy. Indeed, it is sufficiently clear that it was to escape the burden of much thinking that Mr. Davidson turned self-consciously to that Heinesque, topsy-turvy world where gods and mortals jostle together—a world where, in almost every one of his books, we find him. His attitude would seem to be, that though the golden age indeed be passed, one has but stoutly to make-believe to bring it back. Adventures are to the adventurous. You have only to play a part to be it. Mr. Davidson has the boy's imagination, and particularly his romantic belief in costume:

> 'These gala robes wherein we now are dressed,
> Why should we cast for good and all to-night?'

asks the masquer in 'A Romantic Farce.' Why not be what we seem—nay, what at heart we really are? It is in this spirit that Ninian Jamieson in *Perfervid*, anachronistically drawing on doublet and hose, sets out with his bewildered Sancho Panza, Cosmo Morti-

mer, to proclaim himself the last of the Stuarts; it is so, in the same book, that the little Scotch boy, intoxicated by *The Pilgrim's Progress*, starts on a pilgrimage to the Celestial City, and, meeting a grocer's boy by the way, takes him for Apollyon in disguise. Whence results a splendid boys' fight, ending in reconciliation, and the subsequent discovery that the grocer's boy is not Apollyon, but a possible fellow-pilgrim. So the two boys journey together. A most beautiful, nay —bearing Mr. Greenwood's recent distinction in mind —a lovely story. So Scaramouch visits Naxos, with Harlequin and Columbine, to capture Bacchus for his show: an expedition, need one say, requiring more courage and resource in the poet than in the impresario. *Scaramouch in Naxos: a Pantomime*, it is not too much to say, is worthy of our greatest living master of fantasy, the author of *The Shaving of Shagpat*. Indeed, no one else but Mr. Meredith and Mr. Davidson, of living writers, could have written it. Again, *Smith: a Tragic Farce*, is the product of the same indomitable refusal to recognise the dividing-line betwixt the real and the ideal. It reminds one of Beddoes in its wilful heaping-up of hyperbole. It is the very madness of writing, evidently the product of Mr. Davidson's volcanic period, before the world of his creation had settled down into anything like order. Fiery comets of expression blaze across the pages, uncouth rocks, and maybe rubbish, are hurled to impossible heights; but all speak of a tremendous vital energy, and prophesy a world about to form; and through the howling, lurid chaos fall not infrequently the soft lights of tranquil stars. *An*

Unhistorical Pastoral is frankly a nineteenth-century excursion to the Forest of Arden. It is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* over again, but with what amazing freshness of invention and enchanting lyric rapture! One naturally compares it with Darley's *Sylvia*; but, if Darley's fairies are just a thought more exquisite in fancy, Mr. Davidson's play is in every other respect superior. The *verve* of it is tremendous. In *Bruce*, the one play that remains to be mentioned, Mr. Davidson momentarily forsakes his fantastic world to write 'a chronicle play' of veritable history. It is interesting, if only to notice how sober his madcap muse can become; but if in thus going to meet Truth she puts off her various fanciful bedizenments, it is to be feared she forgoes no little of her magic also. *Bruce* has many dramatic excellences, but it lacks that best excellence, glamour; and of no other of Mr. Davidson's books can the same be said. With *Fleet Street Eclogues* we are back once more into Mr. Davidson's real world—though, indeed, the invitation is to Fleet Street—just as in his last prose book, *A Random Itinerary*, we make a walking-tour of Arcady, though ostensibly we trudge the suburbs and never go further afield than the Chilterns.

Fleet Street Eclogues are, I think, Mr. Davidson's maturest poems. In them we see the various qualities of his genius working most perfectly in harmony. Also, they entirely escape the suspicion which might be held to attach to such a play as *The Unhistorical Pastoral*, that of being an amazingly clever *pastiche*. There is nothing in English poetry with which one can quite

compare them in their whimsical association of incongruities.

The paradox of the title is sufficient index of the desperate poetic experiment, though, of course, it gives us no hint of its magnificent success. Here, indeed, Mr. Davidson's fine sense of contrast has fitting scope. To set journalists talking together in a Fleet Street tavern in the dialect of Spenser's shepherds, to mingle in their talk modern pessimism and ancient peace, to give us lovely glimpses of the fields and lanes through the dingy windows of a newspaper office, and to make it all real, needed no small inventive skill and rarely persuasive magic. The result is a new 'Shepherd's Calendar,' more fascinating—dare one admit it?—than the original. Mr. Davidson's treatment of the Elizabethan eclogue; his infusing it with a modern intensity of note, while retaining its own lyric sweetness; his dramatic vitalisation, and his merely metrical development of it—is a notable artistic triumph. There is a peculiar wildwood Shakespearean sweetness about Mr. Davidson's nature poetry, and nature poetry, directly or indirectly, comes, I should think, to something like half of his poetical product. Lovely pictures, such as this from *Scaramouch in Naxos*, are scattered broadcast through his books:

> 'O, pray you, let us walk!
> Sarmion, three miles together through the wood
> Shimmering with moonlight, full of smothered sound,
> And ghostly shadow, and the mingled scent
> Of flowers and spices, and the cooling earth!
> It is a very lifetime of delight!'

Such passages as this, and lovelier, grow in primrose-

clumps all about *Fleet Street Eclogues*. I despair of giving any idea of the 'note' of these unique poems by extracts; but rather than that the reader should be left to my bare word, I quote a passage in which 'Percy' chides 'Menzies' for his city-pessimism and prescribes his panacea of country sights and sounds:

'Ah! I know
How ill you are. You shall to-morrow do
What I now order you.
At early dawn through London you must go
Until you come where long black hedgerows grow,
With pink buds pearled, with here and there a tree,
And gates and stiles; and watch good country folk;
And scent the spicy smoke
Of withered weeds that burn where gardens be;
And in a ditch perhaps a primrose see.
The rooks shall stalk the plough, larks mount the skies,
Blackbirds and speckled thrushes sing aloud,
Hid in the warm white cloud
Mantling the thorn, and far away shall rise
The milky low of cows and farmyard cries.
From windy heavens the climbing sun shall shine,
And February greet you like a maid
In russet-cloak arrayed;
And you shall take her for your mistress fine,
And pluck a crocus for her valentine.'

'Percy'—whose philosophy, I venture to surmise, is Mr. Davidson's own—has another manly passage, in which he tells us that the knowledge of other people's happiness, the sense of sunshine somewhere in the world, is enough to keep him happy. Though old and poor and living in a garret, it comforts him to think that outside in the warmer world

'. . . many a long-wed man and woman find
The deepest peace of mind,
Sweet and mysterious to each other yet.'

He feels himself 'still in Nature's debt' for the memory of his first love long ago, and to his brave thinking all the sorrow of the world 'is but Love's needful shadow.' This strain is indeed of a higher mood than that to which recently we have been accustomed.

I have said nothing of Mr. Davidson as a ballad-writer. A finer tragic ballad than that which concludes *Fleet Street Eclogues*, or that which concludes *A Random Itinerary*, has not been written for many years. I repeat, in conclusion, that not one of our younger poets is so inclusive in power, has so many strings to his bow, as Mr. Davidson. Whether as fantastic dramatist, fantastic novelist, pastoral poet, or tragic balladist, he is easily 'head of all our quire.' And whatever else he may be, he is always a wit as well.

G. S. Street: 'The Autobiography of a Boy.'

IRONY is one of the rarest, as one of the most delightful, of literary qualities. It is seldom attempted of late, more obvious methods of humour being the fashion. For the essence of irony is in its delicacy; it should be a scarcely imperceptible tone in the voice, and, as Mr. Meredith once ruled in a lost essay on the Comic Spirit, it should be kind. Like a 'London Lyric' in Mr. Dobson's definition, it should waver ''twixt a smile and tear.' As it becomes infused with bitterness, it partakes rather of the nature of sarcasm. These 'glimpses into the obvious' have been suggested by the reading of a

delightful little book, the wicked charm of which is certainly not of the obvious kind. *The Autobiography of a Boy* is its whimsically inconsequential title, its writer Mr. G. S. Street; and a title-page in the true spirit of the book is contributed as a sort of illustrative comment by Mr. Furse. Perhaps, after these hints, there is no need to warn the possible purchaser that the book is nothing in the nature of a new *Tom Brown*, and that it is not designed as a good-conduct prize for good boys in suburban academies. The hero thus ironically described as a 'boy' is one of those nineteen-year-old public school and university men of the world, who have exhausted all the possibilities of our complex 'civilisation' before attaining their majority, who settle down to middle age at twenty-two, and who all along survey the world of fossils and fathers from a lofty pinnacle of a not unkindly patronage, not unnatural in young gentlemen of such varied and rapid experience. Mr. Street's portrait of his amazing and amusing young prig, one of those precocious children who are emphatically father to the man, selections from whose confessions are supposed here to be made by a friend, is wrought with a most delicate humour. The irony is never laid on too thick. It is indeed evident that Mr. Street has a certain measure of that sympathy with his hero which is indispensable to successful delineation. He writes like a Narcissus in love with his own ugliness.

Sketching a few of his friend 'Tubby's' characteristics in a tender, retrospective vein, by way of editorial apology, Mr. Street tells us that when he was sent down by college authorities blind to the distinction of

his fine temperament, 'they were not men of the world' was the harshest comment he himself was ever known to make on them. He spoke with invariable kindness of the dons at Oxford, complaining only that they had not absorbed the true atmosphere of the place, which he loved. He was thought eccentric there, and was well known only in a small and very exclusive set. But a certain amount of general popularity was secured to him by the disfavour of the powers, his reputation for wickedness, and the supposed magnificence of his debts. His theory of life also compelled him sometimes to get drunk. In his first year he was a severe ritualist, in his second an anarchist and an atheist, in his third wearily indifferent to all things, in which attitude he remained in the two years since he left the University until now, when he is gone from us. Another of his peculiarities was that 'he desired to be regarded as a man to whom no chaste woman should be allowed to speak, an aim he would mention wistfully, in a manner inexpressibly touching, for he never achieved it.'

His confessions open with this delicious revelation of his point of view in regard to woman:

'I shall never forget the horror of the moment when I knew that Juliet loved me. Our intercourse had been so pleasant; it was hard that this barrier should be raised between us.' Of another kind of Juliet—'the Juliet of a night,' as Mr. Arthur Symons euphemistically phrases it—he takes a no less original, but more serious and entirely wise and human view in 'Lalage, the Bore.'

'I have never,' he says, 'cared for the society of Lalage and her like. My reason is simple: they bore me to death. It is not that

they are vulgar, or coarse, or mercenary. It is that from my point of view they are painfully, nay shockingly respectable. This may sound a paradox, but it is sadly true. Words are more than lives. Their lives are as they are; but they appear to keep intact the silly bourgeois prejudices in which they were bred. I say to them things which some women I know would argue about or smile at as the case might be; those others cannot conceive that I am serious. They cannot understand that I do not share traditional interpretations of right and wrong; they insist tacitly on my regarding myself as a sinner and them as outcasts. Then again they are snobbish, reverencing accidental advantages of wealth and rank: some foolish companion richer than I—though quite uneducated—has frequently been preferred to me. So I avoid their society. But this avoidance has often been misunderstood by my friends, and attributed to a foolish morality at which I should be the first to blush. And last night they sported with my reluctance until I was grieved, and so I was introduced to Lalage. Ah! how unspeakably tedious she was! I had hoped for a moment to find her a Faustine, or at least with something of Herodias's daughter. She was merely a respectable Cockney playing truant. I wanted her to be wild and wicked and abandoned, and she was nothing of the sort. *Indeed, so respectable was Lalage that she didn't think "ladies ought to smoke in public"!*'

This view must be shared by many who, tempted by the raptures of the music-hall school, may occasionally, in the interests of that 'self-development' which Mr. Grant Allen tells us 'is greater than self-sacrifice,' have outraged the domesticities and taken a plunge into the wild and whirling dissipations of the Pavilion or the Alhambra. Ah! as Mr. Street says, how unspeakably tedious it was! And in making this criticism Mr. Street is harder on the *décadent* than any amount of virtuous indignation. Few of us can be saved from wickedness by the sense of its being wicked, but once prove that wickedness is tiresome, and we are virtuous immediately. Perhaps the most irresistible thing in the book is

'Tubby's' interview with his father; the cool nonchalance of it, the quite unaffected filial patronage, are delicious. 'You know I 'm a plain, uncultivated person,' said the father. 'He is somewhat over-fond of parading his ignorance,' comments the son, 'but I was fain to reassure him, and told him simply I respected him none the less on that account.' Among the scattered apothegms of this extraordinary young man is the charming remark, 'I suppose the criminal class does exist, but I despair of meeting with it'; and was snobbish provincial scorn of the Colonies ever put into a conciser sneer than when Tubby, packing for his absurd exile to a Canadian bank, remarks, 'I suppose it is of no use to take my evening clothes to Canada?' Of course this kind of humour is by no means 'new.' The book suggests a self-portrayal of Mr. Oscar Wilde as a young man. The type both of hero and humourist is not unknown in Oxford halls, but I don't remember to have seen the kind of thing done so well before. To portray an affected type without affectation, as Mr. Street contrives to do, needs considerable literary skill.

Andrew Lang: 'Cock Lane and Common Sense.'

THE fluctuations of opinion, the caprices of the Zeitgeist, are as the eccentricities of comets. Who shall reduce them to law? But a very short time back we had most successfully solved the universe in terms of materialistic common-sense, and, at any rate, no one dreamed but that 'the supernatural' had been slain once for all

by such doughty giant-killers of superstition as Professors Huxley and Tyndall. Once more, however, the weather-vane of thought points due east, the land of myths and dreams; and as mysticism fell for a brief space before the arrogant onset of physical science, physical science seems likely once more to have a hard fight with mysticism. For the transcendentalist, the supernaturalist, the spiritualist return upon us, having learned one important lesson from their scientific opponents, namely their scientific methods. In many cases they are able to hoist them on their own petard. Though far be it from Mr. Andrew Lang to seriously ally himself with any point of view whatsoever, yet to those who read between the lines there can be little doubt that in his new book, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, he is inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to Cock Lane rather than to Common Sense. His random gossip on spiritualism, psychical research, haunted houses, apparitions, and hallucinations, crystal-gazing, table-turning, and second-sight, is one more proof that what he admirably calls the 'stuff and nonsense' theory of the universe is rapidly breaking down. Common-sense is, indeed, a precious gift. It saves us from ten thousand snares. Mr. Meredith has eulogised it in one of his recent poems. It is, he says, rarely the accompaniment of beauty. Yet this much is sure, and Mr. Lang's brilliant gossip makes it doubly sure, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in its philosophy. For the ordinary relations of life it is invaluable. Most tragedies may be said to result from the lack of it.

But in the extraordinary relations of life it is painfully inadequate.

Face to face with the mysteries of love and death, it is a mere shopman. It deals with a concrete world of municipalities and powers, a world of eligible building lots, regulated by County Council. For a world which, we are sometimes sweetly or cruelly reminded, lies beneath and above our wood-pavements, it has nothing but ignorant denial. The Bank of England is (for the present) a reality; good dinners, if not probabilities, belong to the region of the possible; then there are music-halls to be bored in and pretty women to yawn with sympathetically—such and such are certainties. Here, at least, is fact—anything else to which the world's coarse thumb is insensitive must be, as Mr. Lang says, 'stuff and nonsense.'

> 'Ah, take the Cash and let the Credit go,
> Nor heed the rolling of a distant drum.'

However, there have been men in all times for whom the rolling, so to say, of that Tedworth drum has had a fascination. If life has no other meaning than lobster salad, then farewell life! Mr. Lang, to his credit, has never subscribed to the lobster salad view of life. Yet he has never definitely taken the other view. Either he has no courage or no convictions! which is it? Doubtless he will smile at my taking his Cock Lane gossip so seriously. Perhaps he but meant it no more seriously than we mean those fascinated gossips of ghost and bogey round the fire on Christmas nights. No, I think that, beneath all his chaff, he intends seriously. At any rate, he unmistakably contends that the accumulation of

stories so strangely concurring, though told by peoples of so widely different times and places, whether or not of any value as evidence of the facts alleged, is of great interest in regard to the psychology and history of human opinion. Surely it is an odd thing that the Eskimo, and the Neo-Platonist, the Maori, and the Psychical Research Society, St. Joseph of Cupertino and Lord Orrery's butler, the Wesley young ladies and 'scratching Fanny' of Cock Lane, should have the same tale to tell of human bodies being lifted in the air, of tables and chairs prancing and caracoling, apparently without human collusion, of mysterious rappings and scratchings, of fearsome imitations of the dead and the distant, and all the rest of those phenomena at which the scientist may scornfully sniff, but which, at any rate, he does not explain. When, in the guise of common-sense, he does condescend to consider such 'superstitious' matters, his explanation is harder to credit than the original mystery. 'There is a point,' Mr. Lang admirably says, 'at which the explanations of common-sense arouse scepticism.' As when, for instance, in one story a bed and its occupant are wildly rushed about a room without, apparently, any mortal agency. A 'common-sense' Frenchman suggests that probably the occupant had some peculiar knack of tossing about the bed! Mr. Lang wisely comments, 'This experiment may be attempted by any philosopher. Let him lie in a bed with castors, and try how far he can make it run while he kicks about in it.'

Mr. Lang makes another good point in his criticism of the usual platitude that belief in the supernatural is

only to be found in dark ages, and, so to say, among dark peoples—that, as 'civilisation' advances, it disappears. The precise opposite would seem to be the fact, and Theosophy is the latest evidence to the contrary. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Lang for his concluding chapter on the 'Ghost Theory of the Origin of Religion,' the latest pet theory of the anthropologists. 'If all this be valid,' he says, referring to the anthropological theory, 'the idea of God is derived from a savage fallacy, though, of course, it does not follow that an idea is erroneous *because* it was attained by mistaken processes and from false premises'—a point of view to which the present writer has elsewhere ventured humbly to draw attention. Mr. Lang buttresses his position by this very pregnant parallel: 'All scientific verities,' he adds, 'have been attained in this manner by a gradual modification and improvement of inadequate working hypotheses, by the slow substitution of correctness for error. Thus monotheism and the doctrine of the soul may be in no worse case than the Copernican theory, or the theory of the circulation of the blood, or the Darwinian theory: itself the successor of innumerable savage guesses, conjectures of Empedocles, ideas of Cuvier, of the elder Darwin, of Lamarck, and of Chambers.' The conclusion of the whole matter for Mr. Lang seems to be, that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. 'Now,' he makes an end, quite seriously for Mr. Lang, 'if there be but one spark of real fire to all this smoke, then the purely materialistic theories of life and of the world must be reconsidered. They seem very well established, but so

have many other theories seemed that are long gone the way of all things human.' I will not shock Mr. Lang's nerves by hailing him, as a poet whom he once suffered, it is to be feared not gladly, once hailed him, as 'friend and brother'—'in the brotherhood of man'! Yet I cannot but rejoice quietly to myself that so Lucianic a person is on the side of the ghosts.

MR. ERNEST RHYS, wearied of impersonal editorial state,

Ernest Rhys: takes down his Welsh harp:

'A London Rose,' etc.

'What Ariel, far astray, with silver wing,
Upborne with airy music, silver-sweet,
Haunts here the London street?—
And from the fog, with harping string on string,
Laughs in the ear, and spurs the lagging feet,
While Caliban-like, London sulks, though all the stars should sing . . .
Here harps the song of Merlin, or the spheres:
But London sleeps unmoved, and dreams his other dreams instead.'

That, however, is no fault of Mr. Ernest Rhys. Though his poetic gift may suggest rather the harpsichord than the harp, whatever its depth or volume it is genuine, and, that settled, the firing of the Thames is a secondary consideration. Those who would hear a sweet voice, with no little of Celtic pathos and passion in it, singing of the simple joys of love and home, the hillside, and generally of 'the things that are more excellent,' will appreciate *A London Rose and other Rhymes*,

by Mr. Rhys. Mr. Rhys has felt, and fitly celebrates, the poetry of the town; but there is a good deal more Wales than London in his song, and who is going to quarrel with him for that? I, at any rate, love him best in his Welsh 'Mountain Cottage':—

'Heart and harbour of our days!
If afar our feet may roam,
Glad at last we hasten home,
Following the famous ways
Where your bards and heroes passed,
Glad at heart to come at last
Here, and find a breathing-space
In your mountain resting-place.'

George Meredith: 'Lord Ormont and his Aminta.'

SOME day, to our grandchildren, it will seem a legendary privilege to have read one of Mr. Meredith's novels as it came from the press, rosy and palpitating with its own masterful and full-blooded individuality. Just so we look back to the time when *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis* were still, as till a week or two ago was *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, an uncompleted series of treasured parts. In that day we shall have collectors boasting the possession of the true *editio princeps* in the form of bound numbers of the *Pall Mall Magazine*—with the covers intact, the margins untrimmed, and all the advertisements! Which reminds one that the custom of inserting loose leaf advertisements in books and magazines affords

one more opportunity to the vigilance of the collector. One can imagine first editions of the future fetching at least a pound or two more from the fact of their preserving, not only the bound, but the loose advertisements, the cards slipped between the pages by importunate soap-boilers and insurance companies. What particular brand of mineral waters was it that was advertised between the virgin pages of the original *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*? Such will be the questions which the Meredithian collector of the future will feel a natural pride in being able to answer. At the moment, we must, I fear, leave the question, important as it is, in favour of others hardly less imperative. What of *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* itself?

One is often asked to name 'the best' among Mr. Meredith's novels, as if it were possible to discriminate in such arbitrary fashion among books each of which has its own unique and, therefore (in the strict sense of the adjective), incomparable character. There are no two of Mr. Meredith's novels nearly enough alike to admit of such appraisement. Who is going to say that *The Egoist* is greater than *Richard Feverel*, or *Rhoda Fleming* than *Evan Harrington*? The aim in each case being different, how is it possible to measure the success by an uniform scale? Of course, one can discriminate the relative greatness of the *genre* in any two of the novels. We can say that the *genre* of *Richard Feverel* is greater than that of *The Egoist* in that it more nearly approaches poetry, to which psychological analysis, however wonderful, must take a secondary rank. But I fall in danger of being drawn into that very com-

parison which I deprecate; so let me say at once that, comparisons apart, *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* is a novel, or perhaps one should say romance, for which the lover of literature will do well to put up his hands and, in the words of the old grace, be 'truly thankful.'

Even at his worst, which (without a quite stultifying violation of the non-comparative principle just laid down) we may describe as *One of our Conquerors*, Mr. Meredith is always to be found at his best as well. In all that prickly Central African jungle of fantastic imagery and phrase, there were yet to be found blooming wonderful simple flowers with England's own dew upon them—beautiful phrases well worth all the scramble through bush and brier. In *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* we have equally the beauty, but much less of the scramble. Compared with *One of our Conquerors*, it is simplicity itself. Mr. Meredith, of course, has his mad moments when he rides his Pegasus of fancy to absurd death. For example, on one occasion: 'Lady Charlotte talked. She was excited, and ran her sentences to blanks, a cunning way for ministering consolation to her hearing, where the sentence intended a question, and the blank ending caught up the query tone and carried it dwindling away to the most distant of throttled interrogatives.' When Aminta tells her lover that she has written to her husband, Lord Ormont, informing him of her intention to leave him, we are told that 'their eyes engaged on the thunder of this'; and again, when Lord Ormont has a certain importunate misgiving concerning Aminta, we are told that 'he had to flick a bee of a question.' It is some-

what difficult even for the devout Meredithian to see what is gained in such instances as these by Mr. Meredith's persistent method of bewilderingly metaphorical expression. Do the 'throttled interrogatives,' 'the thunder,' and the 'bee' in any one of these passages contribute in any way to their force or beauty? Do they not rather tease us with their pointless prancings of the imagination?

Against these occasional absurdities, however, we have to set numberless phrases of great beauty and wisdom. Here are a few gathered at random: 'The forest Goddess of the Crescent, swanning it through a lake—on the leap for the run of the chase—watching the dart, with her humming bow at breast.' 'They talked to hear one another's voices.' 'Her look at him fed the school on thoughts of what love really is when it is not fished out of books and poetry.' 'How preach at a creature on the bend of passion's rapids!' 'The vision of a strenuous lighted figure.' 'Thames played round them on his pastoral pipes. Bee-note, and wood-side blackbird, and meadow cow, and the leap of the fish of the silver rolling rings composed the music.'

As a thinker, Mr. Meredith's rare significance for us at the moment is that he is at once 'in the movement' and 'of the centre.' He is the secret inspiring spring of all the prophets of the various 'new' movements. He is the most radical thinker we have, and hence the encouraging significance of his being also the most hopeful, the least pessimistic. On the great Woman Question, Mr. Meredith has been the most outspoken of modern prophets; but one has only to compare the

accent of his prophesyings with that of some other novelists of 'the new spirit' to be aware of a great and important difference. Mr. Meredith still speaks of woman, as he once beautifully phrased it, 'with a blush in the voice.' His passion always contains an element of boyish purity. It is always 'noble strength on fire.' Consequently, so daring a statement of that matrimonial problem which is day by day becoming more pressing, and so unflinching an answer to it, as *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, coming from Mr. Meredith, have an authority such as no other living writer could have given them. For, Reader, this is one more of those 'women' novels of which, forsooth, we have had enough of late—but with the important difference that it is written by Mr. Meredith.

Lord Ormont is an elderly national hero, whose vigorous military policy in India has met with the usual revulsion of national feeling. An ungrateful country somewhat beclouds him for a time, but long before the eclipse, and after, he had been the hero alike of a certain boys' and a certain girls' school. 'Cuper's' boys and 'Miss Vincent's' girls alike adored him, and this common adoration was largely influential, in conjunction with other natural causes, such as manly beauty on the one hand and womanly on the other, to draw together the souls of the king and queen of the respective schools—'Matey' Weyburn and 'Browny' Farrell. However, fate, in the shape of an aunt, was against them, and they were parted. By curious chance, some years after, 'Browny' becomes the wife and 'Matey' the private secretary of their school-days hero, Lord Ormont. 'Browny' is a real, or rather a legal, wife to Lord

Ormont, with accessible marriage lines; but from a certain cussedness of disposition he declines for a long time to make the marriage public—with the consequence that 'Matey's' reputation suffers, she is nibbled at by one or two adventurous lady-killers, and herself grows sad and lonely of heart. At this juncture enters the young secretary. Space forbids my following the game of passion and honour between these passionate and honourable souls. Never were two lovers at once more passionate and more honourable. The game is just one of those subtle tussles of sex and convention which Mr. Meredith loves to umpire; and he has seldom managed the duel with more exciting suspense than in this between 'Matey' and 'Browny': now passion gains a point, and now law; now law seems on the point of extinguishing passion once and for all, and then, next minute, passion has the lady blushing in his arms ready for a run with her—and so the game goes this way and that, with delicious interludes, such as that hour at the inn together. But 'by various ways men attain to the same end'; and though one had quite given up 'Matey' and 'Browny's' romance for lost, just, as Drayton sings, 'at the last gasp of love's latest breath,' up it flares again, and the reader is made happy by 'Matey' and 'Browny' counting the world well lost so that they keep each other.

It is characteristic of Mr. Meredith's method that this *dénoûment* should, after all the noble struggle and self-denial, the resolutions to be 'good,' of the two lovers, come about all but independently of their resolution, by sheer accident. In the present case, given the situation,

the conclusion is doubtless natural enough, but it must be admitted that the situation has to be somewhat arbitrarily supplied. The lovers have finally parted. 'Matey' is going to found an international school in Switzerland, and he is standing on the deck of a vessel outward bound, close in shore on the Southern coast, when he sees 'Browny' bathing!

The impulse to dive in pursuit of her is too strong. The mighty mother has her way with him, and the idyll of the two lovers swimming together, grotesque as in the hands of a smaller writer it might well have been, is one of the sweetest idylls in fiction. There is quite the old *Richard Feverel* bloom upon it.

'"What sea-nymph sang me thy name?"
'She smote a pang of her ecstasy into him: "Ask mine!"
'"Browny!"
'They swam; neither of them panted; their heads were water-flowers that spoke at ease.
'"We've run from school; we won't go back."
'"We've a kingdom."
'"Here's a big wave going to be a wall."
'"Off he rolls."
'"He's like the high Brent broad meadow under Elling Wood."
'"Don't let Miss Vincent hear you." . . .'

Thus 'they swam silently, high, low, creatures of the smooth green roller. He heard the water-song of her swimming.' After this the die is cast; Aminta leaves her lord, and joins her 'Matey' in his educational dreams, while Lord Ormont shows what good stuff there is in him—not to speak of his sense of irony, and heaping coals of fire—by sending one of his grand-nephews to their great school! Mr. Meredith leaves us

in no manner of doubt as to how he regards the situation. Near the end he has this significant passage:

'Laws are necessary instruments of the majority; but when they grind the sane human being to dust for their maintenance, their enthronement is the rule of the savage's old deity, sniffing blood-sacrifice. There cannot be a based society upon such conditions. An immolation of the naturally constituted individual arrests the general expansion to which we step, decivilises more, and is more impious to the God in man than temporary revelries of a licence that Nature soon checks.'

And still more explicit are Weyburn's solemn words of plighting to his 'Browny':

'I shall not consider that we are malefactors. We have the world against us. It will not keep us from trying to serve it. And there are hints of humaner opinions: it's not all a huge rolling block of Juggernaut. Our case could be pleaded before it. I don't think the just would condemn us heavily. . . . With a world against us, our love and labour are constantly on trial; we must have great hearts, and if the world is hostile we are not to blame it. In the nature of things it could not be otherwise. My own soul, we have to see that we do—though not publicly, not insolently—offend good citizenship. But we believe—I with my whole faith, and I may say it of you—that we are not offending Divine law.'

At the present time of ferment and transition the first significance of *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* is that it is something like an ultimate deliverance on the great question of the relations of the sexes, by a philosopher who sees life steadily and sees it whole, as perhaps no other living English philosopher does, and whose judgment always carries that authority which belongs to a man who, while pushing out sympathetically towards the future, welcoming the newest ideas and developments, yet remains safely rooted in the eternal verities

of human nature. The marriage laws may, and doubtless will, be changed, but love will remain. So long as we keep fast hold of that elementary principle, the modes of its operation may safely be left to develop themselves. The danger of conventions in this matter, as in all matters pertaining to the spiritual side of us, is that the mere mode of its operation may be mistaken for the principle itself. The past has certainly provided us with plentiful illustrations of marriage without love; it is for the future, say the new philosophers, to show us love without marriage.

Walter Pater: died July 30, 1894.

PROBABLY the entire sale of Mr. Walter Pater's books from the beginning has not yet equalled the first 'subscription list' of some indecently boomed and wire-pulled novels. The man in the street knows nothing of the *Studies in the Renaissance*, *Marius the Epicurean*, or the *Imaginary Portraits*, yet in subtle indirect fashion these books will influence his children's children. After all, circulation is not everything, and Mr. Pater is perhaps even likely to leave a greater mark on his time than, say—well, we won't mention names. Mr. Pater, like Mr. Meredith, is one of those writer's writers who reach what we call the general public at second or perhaps tenth hand. He is one of those literary springs, 'occult, withdrawn,' at which the best of our younger writers have secretly drunk. He is like the unseen hand in Bunyan pouring

unacknowledged oil upon the flames of their various talents. When he has exerted no more particular influence upon them, he has, at least, been responsible for their approaching their work in a more serious artistic spirit than might have occurred to them, without the example of his own fastidious practice. Few writers have had such a passion for perfection. One naturally thinks of Flaubert, and of all he suffered for 'the unique word'; and it would be interesting if some intimate would tell us if Mr. Pater travailed in such agony—in Flaubert's case literally mortal—for his beautiful prose.

It is natural to think of Mr. Pater first as a writer of prose rather than as a teacher or a critic, though he was both in an eminent degree. Some found his teaching enervating and his criticism thin, but really such criticisms are little more relevant against him than they would be against Charles Lamb or Izaak Walton. It matters nothing to us that Lamb brings us no profound philosophy of life, or that Walton was behind even his own times as a practical fisherman. So with Mr. Pater: though to some his matter has been of considerable spiritual and intellectual significance, the abiding appeal of his writings is in their beauty of form, and that glamour of personal temperament which pervades them. Which is but to say that Mr. Pater is to be regarded first and foremost as an artist, essentially a creative writer, choosing, for the most part, to work ostensibly through the medium of criticism.

When, for example, he writes of Leonardo da Vinci, no doubt he has admirable illuminative things to say

about that master from the merely critical point of view; yet surely it is not in his general view of Leonardo that his essay finds its chief *raison d'être*, but in that famous passage in which he sets free his imagination to read in *La Gioconda* wonderful mystic meanings, such as probably no eyes save his own ever saw there; to dream his own dream of that fair woman whose beauty was 'a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions,' and to whom long cycles of rich and moving experience had been 'but as the sound of lyres and flutes.' Mr. Pater was pre-eminently of those critics whose attitude a distinguished French critic has charmingly hit off in the well-known sentence: 'Messieurs, je vais parler de moi à propos de Shakespeare, à propos de Racine, ou de Pascal, ou de Goethe. C'est une assez belle occasion.'

The interest of Mr. Pater's writing is entirely subjective; whatever his themes, they but interest us for the time as seen through, so to say, the stained-glass window of his own rich and very idiosyncratic temperament.

'But his faults!' cries some alarmed critic of that truly British race which approaches an artist on the principle of displaying the defects, and leaving the reader to judge for himself upon the residual merits. Mr. Pater was not a 'simple' writer. Indeed—dreadful thought!—was he not a 'euphuist'? Was he not mannered and very sugary? Was he, indeed, quite 'manly'? I cannot resist asking by what literary council has it been decided, as an absolute law, that

writing must be always simple, unmannered, unadorned, or, indeed, so-called 'manly'? Doubtless the greatest writing possesses these characteristics; but it takes all sorts to make a world, and to judge all literature by the greatest, and be satisfied with nothing less, would be to lose us some of the most delightful books that have ever been written. Because we have had a Bunyan, shall there be no De Quincey? Because we have had a Tennyson, shall there be no Edmund Gosse? There is none of Mr. Pater's various lessons that the modern critic more needs to learn than that of giving fair play to all schools of art, appreciating each from its own aim and point of view. In this comprehensiveness of appreciation, Mr. Pater was the only critic we had who approached Matthew Arnold, though one would not think of contending that merely as a critic he was anything like the equal of Arnold. He was less of the centre, and more the representative of a somewhat exotic temperament. Moreover, as a literary critic, he represented the exact opposite school from that of Arnold. Arnold was all for the 'moral idea' in literature; Pater was, broadly speaking, for the *l'art pour l'art* conception of it. He held that the first appeal of literature, of all art, was to the sense of beauty; and in his famous essay on 'The School of Giorgione,' he contended, with much ingenuity and power, that music, in its very indefiniteness, was the true archetype of all the arts. 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music.' 'The ideal types of poetry,' he writes in a famous passage, 'are those in which' the distinction between matter and form 'is reduced to a *minimum*; so

that lyrical poetry, precisely because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction of something from that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding, as in some of the most imaginative compositions of William Blake, and often in Shakespeare's songs, as pre-eminently in that song of Mariana's page in *Measure for Measure*, in which the kindling force and poetry of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music.'

If one is unable to accept this conception of art entirely as it stands, yet we may profitably associate it with other maybe broader conceptions, as one of those part-truths which contribute to that whole truth which ever remains incomplete.

In his own writings, sensuously beautiful as they are, Mr. Pater is far from living up to this æsthetic standard. His writings abound in high spiritual counsel and subtle psychological observations. As a study of the development of a soul on its 'journey from this world to the next,' a soul of rare spiritual purity and refinement, *Marius the Epicurean* stands alone. Never were the *nuances* of such a temperament so faithfully registered; and if the book has its dangers for weak minds (as Mr. Pater himself feared), minds which might confound its lofty, almost austere gospel of pleasure, of giving 'the highest quality to our moments as they

pass,' with the degrading so-called Epicureanism which profanes the name of a great philosopher, there must be many more in whose lives it has been a bracing and purifying influence. For, despite Mr. Pater's detractors, it is, in the best sense of the word, a manly (were one writing in the seventeenth century, one might even say godly) book. 'Not pleasure, but fulness, completeness of life generally,' is a sentence which most fairly sums up its philosophy; and for sheer beauty, glamour, fragrance — that mysterious fragrance as of incense which clings about every word Mr. Pater wrote—where in English literature is there a book like it?

In Mr. Pater's death we have lost a writer who is destined to rank as a classic along with Sir Thomas Browne and Charles Lamb, and a temperament which upon a certain type of mind will exert an enduring influence.

Arthur O'Shaughnessy: Mrs. Moulton's Selections.

SURELY no one has ever been more faithful to dead friends than Mrs. Chandler Moulton. None of us are dead, said George Eliot, till we are forgotten; and certainly, if that be true, both Philip Marston and Arthur O'Shaughnessy are still a long way from death. It will not be the fault of one loving friend if they do not achieve immortality. Mrs. Moulton has written much about the Marston circle. For my part, I will make bold to confess that Marston himself has, if anything, been a little over-appreciated. At any rate, he

has had his full share of the good things of praise; while, on the other hand, his brother-poet, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, has received a great deal less than his due. Unforgivable as I fear the remark may seem to Marston's extreme admirers, I am bound to say that, little as has been made of O'Shaughnessy, and much as has been made of Marston, O'Shaughnessy is really the finer poet of the two. Both of them suffer rather tiresomely from that lack of thought and excess of music and other sensuous qualities which are the marks of the æsthetic school to which they belong. But Marston's verbiage (his constantly beating out thin themes of sorrow into utter tenuity of thought or fancy) is less varied by verbal or metrical magic than O'Shaughnessy's. Both poets had constantly nothing or very little to say; but whereas of his nothing Marston would turn out an uninspired, uninspiring sonnet, heavy as with a very London fog of melancholy, O'Shaughnessy of his nothing would contrive a dancing, glinting little lyric—little more than words, you may say; but is not that the very secret of the lyric? What are some of the best of Shakespeare's or Blake's songs but songs of little meaning, pure effects of melody, cries almost inarticulate of joy or sorrow. With the exception of 'The Rose and the Wind,' Marston hardly ever achieves glamour, whereas O'Shaughnessy in his moments of thinnest thought seldom fails to cast his spell of siren words about us. No one has been a more cunning master at making 'out of three sounds, not a fourth sound, but a star.'

And then his themes are more varied, or at least he

contrives to make them seem so. He has a more vivid sense of colour and dramatic movement, and a more romantic imagination. He is one of the few poets who can dramatically vitalise those long pageant poems such as Tennyson's 'Dream of Fair Women.' Mrs. Moulton quotes this picturesque description of Cleopatra as an example :

'She made a feast for great Marc Antony :
Her galley was arrayed in gold and light ;
That evening in the purple sea and sky,
It shone green-golden like a chrysolite.

She was reclined upon a Tyrian couch
Of crimson wools ; out of her loosened vest
Set on one shoulder with a serpent brooch
Fell one white arm and half her foam-white breast.

And with the breath of many a fanning plume,
That wonder of her hair that was like wine—
Of mingled fires and purples that consume—
Moved all its mystery of threads most fine.

And under saffron canopies all bright
With clash of lights, e'en to the amber prow
Crept, like enchantment's subtle, passing sight,
Fragrance, and siren-music soft and slow.'

Then his poetry is steeped in a sensuous mysticism, half Catholic, half pagan, which takes a somewhat repellent form in a mood very constant with O'Shaughnessy, a mood of absorption with the macabre details of death and the grave. This he doubtless caught from Baudelaire and the young French poets of his day, of whom he was a devoted student, as the young men of our day are disciples of M. Verlaine. 'There is an earthly glimmer in the tomb' is one of the fine lines in which

he frequently expresses what seems almost to have been an actual, not merely imaginative, belief in life still going on in the grave. One of his most famous lyrics embodies this in a grimly passionate love-song to a dead mistress, one of the most perfect things of its kind—a kind that would have delighted Thomas Lovell Beddoes :

'Hath any loved you well, down there
Summer or winter through?
Down there have you found any fair
Laid in the grave with you?
Is death's long kiss a richer kiss
Than mine was wont to be,
Or have you gone to some far bliss
And straight forgotten me?'

So runs the first verse, written in O'Shaughnessy's favourite lyric measure, that in which he has given us many such haunting songs. O'Shaughnessy is not always in this morbid mood ; but, as he himself confesses, there is always an esoteric quality about his songs. They are poet's poetry, and are never likely to be heard gladly by the common people :

'A common folk I walk among ;
I speak dull things in their own tongue :
But all the while within I hear
A song, I do not sing for fear—
How sweet, how different a thing !
And when I come where none are near
I open all my heart and sing. . . .

I go with them ; and in their sight
I would not scorn their little light,
Nor mock the things they hold divine ;
But when I kneel before the shrine
Of some base deity of theirs,
I pray all inwardly to mine,
And send my soul up with my prayers.'

And, indeed, O'Shaughnessy had sufficient cause in his sad brief life to grow morbid and introspective. The fate that seems to have hung more or less over the whole æsthetic circle, and especially over the Marstons, fell heavily upon O'Shaughnessy also. It seemed as if, as Mrs. Moulton says, misfortune began for the little group with the death of the young and gifted Oliver Madox Brown. This 'was followed by the loss of the O'Shaughnessy infants, by the death of Mrs. O'Shaughnessy's only sister in 1878, by Mrs. O'Shaughnessy's death in the February of 1879'—and by O'Shaughnessy's own death on 30th January 1881, in his thirty-seventh year.

Yet for all his unhappy struggling life, and his brooding mystical temperament, Mrs. Moulton tells us that O'Shaughnessy was always the most cheerful of men, always bright to talk with, and brimming over with some new interest; and certainly his face, with its mutton-chop whiskers, and rather commonplace though refined and sensitive features, does not seem to belong to the wild poet of many of his verses. 'He was full of enthusiasm,' and, wittily adds Mrs. Moulton, 'had length of days been given him, he would always have been the youngest man in every company.'

R. L. Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne: 'The Ebb-Tide.'

A LOYAL admiration may occasionally, I trust, permit itself a loyal fault-finding. Messrs. Stevenson and Osbourne's new romance, *The Ebb-Tide*, demands loyalty in both directions. Part I. seems to me good, sound adventure. It holds us with the true Stevensonian spell, a tale 'of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.' But when we turn from it, in breathless expectation, to Part II., the change is abrupt and painful. The spell seems suddenly to have failed, and the more we read of the insufferable, impossible Attwater, prig and pearl-fisher, university man and evangelist, expert alike with his Bible and his Winchester, the unreality increases. Even the three men whose fortunes had fascinated us in Part I. seem to lose their humanity so soon as the *Farallone* glides into the still waters of the coral-island lagoon, where the six-foot-four Attwater, a sort of beautiful Frankenstein, lives as elegantly as though his address were Park Lane—superintending his pearl-fishers, wearing clothes of the best West-end cut, drinking the best of wines, and talking with the most affected of university accents. In the self-conscious atmosphere of this fairy island none of the men, who up till now have borne themselves with a certain vigour and individuality, seem any longer able to be themselves. The little Cockney alone preserves something of his original character; and, wicked as it may be, and insufferable little cad as he doubtless was, it was, I confess, a great disappointment to me that he wasn't able to throw that

vitriol at Attwater. With the discharge of Attwater's Winchester the last flicker of interest in the story abruptly dies. Herrick, who has all through been the least alive of the three, has become little more than a lay figure, and the sea-captain Davis a tiresome grotesque. Conceive a rough, drunken, unprincipled, and yet a sort of manly sea-dog (with a soft place in his heart for his wife and children), suddenly converted into a canting milksop, saying his prayers ostentatiously on the beach and calling upon his companion to 'come to Jesus.' It is difficult to understand Mr. Stevenson's intention in this. Did he get a little tired of his story, and determine, in a whimsical mood, to wind it up in a spirit of pure farce—just as once, the reader may remember, he mischievously let the sawdust out of his Prince Florizel of Bohemia?

I have other faults to find with *The Ebb-Tide*: the extreme self-consciousness of some of the writing, and the stilted style of some of the conversations. These latter are mainly in the mouths of Robert Herrick, another university man fallen on evil days and harbouring with strange bedfellows, and, of course, Attwater, who always talks like a book—one of Mr. Meredith's. When Herrick is discussing with his mates a description of the supposed island given in 'Findlay,' he says 'it's rather in the conditional mood'; and even at the beginning of the story, when the three beach-combers are sleeping out in the misery of their destitution, and the Cockney clerk calls out for a yarn, Herrick talks about the Arabian Nights and 'the Freischütz,' as though his companions were Bodley Head poets. It is a pretty

dream-story he tells, all the same. When things seem at their worst, he takes a pencil and writes a phrase from the Fifth Symphony on the wall of the ruinous old calaboose where they are all three taking shelter, adding a tag of Latin underneath. 'So,' thought he, 'they will know that I loved music and had classical tastes.' There is surely an air of unreality about this, and Robert Herrick's very name is against his being quite alive. A name so indissolubly connected with a poet so well known as Herrick cannot be applied to any one else without the new bearer of it being overshadowed by the personality of his original. However, we mustn't forget in dealing with Mr. Stevenson's Herrick that it is romance he is writing, and that the gentleman who has come down in the world, and is driven to house with thieves and vagabonds, but still keeps a Virgil in his pocket, has always been a legitimate figure in romance.

Apart from Herrick's occasionally stilted talk, and particularly Attwater's—who, however, is so unnatural as a whole that, so to say, it would be still more unnatural if his talk were not so too—Mr. Stevenson himself is a little too consciously the literary artist here and there in this new book. If the book were anything but a book of adventure, one would not mind. I am far from missing the charm of a certain air of literary self-consciousness in its right place; but in dealing with rough seamen and perils upon the high seas this literary daintiness strikes a somewhat incongruous note; just as some of Mr. Hardy's stilted writing seems so out of colour in Wessex. And, by the way, would a rough seaman like Davis say 'I love you' to another man?

Wouldn't he express affection for a comrade in some blunter idiom?

However, the first part of *The Ebb-Tide* is as thrilling a piece of narrative as Mr. Stevenson has written; and one or two of the situations—such as that where Huish and the captain drink champagne all day long in the cabin, and leave the ship to look after itself; or the moment when the fraud in the champagne cargo is discovered—are as dramatic as anything Mr. Stevenson has done.

Thomas Hardy: Lionel Johnson's Study.

THE novelist can no longer complain, as Mr. Besant was moved to do some few years ago, that his art is not taken seriously. On the contrary, he is in some danger of being made self-conscious by the incessant public discussion of it: what he may or may not put into his novel, should he idealise his facts or photograph them, and, generally, what the 'mission' of a novelist should be. That this is not entirely good for the novelist we see in the absurd poses with which one or two novelists feel it necessary to support their newly granted importance. It is hardly surprising that they should come to regard themselves as reincarnations of Shakespeare or Æschylus. And, certainly, Mr. Lionel Johnson, in his critical study, *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, finds plenty of reason for justifying Mr. Hardy should he be inclined to cherish that flattering illusion. Mr.

Lionel Johnson, whose learning, judging from the astonishing number of authors he quotes, is remarkable if occasionally a little oppressive, is able to find in Mr. Hardy's work encouraging resemblances to almost every great writer that has ever lived. Æschylus, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Herrick, the Jacobean and Caroline poets, Pascal, Senancour, Robert Burton, Hawthorne—I write down at random but a few of the names with which, for one quality or another, Mr. Hardy's eulogist has made bold to compare him. Such a brief list gives no idea, however, of the number of famous or out-of-the-way authors whom Mr. Lionel Johnson quotes, often with charming fitness, for the general purposes of his essay. Some of us, staunch admirers of Mr. Hardy as we may be, may feel it somewhat of a violation of that fair proportion which Mr. Johnson loves, that a thick book of some three hundred and forty pages should be devoted to the work of a living English novelist, who, as Mr. Johnson reminds us, may yet have his best work in front of him, his first novel having been published so recently as 1871. We may feel also that Mr. Hardy's predecessors in the novel would have proved sufficiently great to measure him by, without bringing in Æschylus, Dante, or Lucretius. Says Mr. Johnson himself: 'There are certain English writers who, in compliment, as it were, to Republican France, appear to hold all French novelists for free and equal; when we have perused and weighed their adjectives in praise of living men, whose claims and charms are of to-day, we fall to wondering what praises may remain for Balzac and for Flaubert.'

Mr. Johnson himself has, I fear, run the risk of our asking: If Mr. Hardy is all these things, what praises may remain for Fielding, Jane Austen, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and George Meredith?—not to speak of Balzac or Tolstoï, and other great names o Russia and France.

However, if Mr. Johnson measures Mr. Hardy by a standard which would dwarf even greater writers, it is a standard all too rarely set up by our younger critics—that of the greatest as opposed to the merely cleverest. Mr. Johnson, in an excellent opening chapter of 'critical preliminaries,' sturdily, if somewhat too consciously, even pompously, declares his 'loyalty to the broad and high traditions of literature; to those humanities which inform with the breath of life the labours of the servants, and the achievements of the masters, in that fine art.' The tone of the declaration reminds one a little of the sailor who, having been told that the English Church was in danger, leaned against a column of St. Paul's and said, 'Never mind, I'll support you.' Still, the attitude is a fine one, and one can have no doubt, in reading his book, that 'the broad and high traditions of literature' will have cause to be thankful to Mr. Johnson. Certainly I do not remember to have read a book of criticism so exalted in its note of almost religious devotion towards all great and good literature. The reverent enthusiasm of the scholar, his sacerdotal regard for books as holy, verily 'inspired,' things, has seldom, I think, found a more impressive and delightful expression. There is quite a pathos in the intensity of Mr. Johnson's devotion, an evident yearning

all through his book, for those great ages of learning, as also for those great ages of faith, from which he really seems to have strayed, a human anachronism, into our age of cheap primers and cheap doubt. His very method is rather that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than of ours. He finds in some of Mr. Hardy's writing a resemblance to that of Robert Burton. His own book as a whole bears no slight resemblance to the *Anatomy*, in its charming medley of authorities, its scholarly catalogues and categories, its artistically careless mosaic of delightful quotations, its old-world piety, its frequent tags of Latin, and its not infrequent passages of Mr. Johnson's grave, quaint, and carefully written prose. Mr. Johnson is particularly happy in grouping together a body of facts, or characteristics, for the purpose of a general impression. He is infinitely patient in his detail, and one realises the extent of his patience when he gravely tells us, without apparently deeming such devotion unusual: 'I have read *Tess* some eight or ten times.'

This mind-picture by which Mr. Johnson symbolises a typical Hardy novel will give the reader some idea of the book at its best:

'A rolling down country, crossed by a Roman road: here, a grey standing-stone, of what sacrificial, ritual origin I can but guess; there, a grassy barrow, with its great bones, its red brown jars, its rude gold ornaments, still safe in earth: a broad sky burning with stars: and a solitary man. It is of no use to turn away, and to think of the village farms and cottages, with their antique ways and looks; of the deep woods, the fall of the woodman's axe, the stir of the wind in the branches; of the rustic feasts and festivals, when the home-brewed drink goes round, to the loosening of tongues and wits; of the hot meadows, fragrant hay-

fields, cool dairies, and blazing gardens; of shining cart-horses under the chestnut trees, and cows called in at milking time: they are characteristic scenes, but not the one characteristic scene. That is the great down by night, with its dead in their ancient graves, and its lonely living figure: it brings before my thought a pageant of Scandinavian warriors, Roman soldiers and Stoics, watchers upon Chaldæan plains, laborious Saxon peasants, Celtic priests in the moonlight; and vast periods of early time, that chill the pondering mind.'

Edmund Gosse: 'In Russet and Silver.'

THERE are two ways of fortifying oneself against the ignominy of age. One, the coarser and pathetically less effective, is to dress and talk young; the other, and undoubtedly the wiser way, is to disarm criticism by anticipating the charge and affecting the 'fogey' before one's time. This latter is Mr. Gosse's way in his new volume of poems entitled *In Russet and Silver*, a title somewhat too trivial in its fancy for so stout a volume, and certainly not too clear in its meaning, which, however, is explained by Mr. Gosse in the stanza inscribed over the entrance to his pages:

> 'Life, that, when youth was hot and bold,
> Leaped up in scarlet and in gold,
> Now walks, by graver hopes possessed,
> In russet and in silver dressed.'

This quatrain strikes the keynote of these poems which Mr. Gosse, in his declining years, has chosen to represent his autumn. It is his 'Good-bye! my Fancy!'

From this time onward, it is presumed that, as used to be the case with the late Dr. Holmes, Mr. Gosse's birthday will be monotonously commented upon each year by sentimental paragraphists: his remarkable intellectual vitality at so advanced an age, his still more surprising social activity, his unfailing sympathy towards the young men eager to supplant him, will all be adduced to illustrate the longevity and magnanimity of men of letters. Dear Mr. Gosse! how terribly nervous he is about that younger generation knocking at the door! Really, he shouldn't show it so plainly, else he will have the young men patronising him, and treating him as a fogey indeed. The burden of his new song is that of the Song of Solomon, namely Sour Grapes. Somewhat in the spirit of those seventeenth-century poets of whom he has, in his day, been so loving a student, Mr. Gosse seeks to propitiate the heavenly powers for his wild and ruddy youth by the inditing of 'Divine Epigrams.' And, though all unsuspected of his contemporaries, what a wild youth Mr. Gosse's has been! In one poem he seems actually to symbolise himself as 'The Prodigal,' and, in two verses which ring with a note of passion such as Mr. Gosse has seldom achieved, thus addresses a lady:

'Thou hast the crafty voice, the magic fingers,
That round the woodland pulse have art to twine;
Yet oft I think, among thy serfs and singers,
The wildest capture was this heart of mine.

Ah! take me home; my pride of pinion broken,
My song untuned, my morning light decayed!
I bring thee back thine own old love for token,
That I am he for whom it toiled and prayed.'

Still, though he casts a longing, lingering look behind at his youth, and apologises to *les jeunes* for taking so much room in the ingle-nook at evening, Mr. Gosse for the most part imitates Solomon, and depreciates what he can no longer enjoy. (To imitate Solomon, by the way, is not always wise.)

> 'Throb, winding belts of odorous light!
> Youth spurns me from its brilliant zest;
> But age has yet its prime delight,
> For thought survives, and thought is best,'

he sings, with somewhat of a whine, in 'An Evening Voluntary'; and again with sly humour he announces that his time has come to

> '. . . with new aims and hopes, prepare
> To love earth less, and more haunt air;
> And be as thankful as I can
> To miss the beast that harries man.'

Of course this is all Mr. Gosse's characteristic irony. He has no intention of abdicating in favour of the younger generation, we may be sure, but will fight it with characteristic courage and astuteness to the bitter end. Personally, I have always thought more of Mr. Gosse's poetry than my contemporaries — or even, I think I may say, Mr. Gosse's contemporaries. Had not Mr. Gosse tamed his wild heart into a professorship, he might have been a considerably bigger poet.

He has the gift of style. All he has needed right through has been the gift of matter. He shouldn't have tamed his heart. How big and wild Mr. Gosse's heart

is will never be known until some admirer snatches his *cor cordium* from his smoking pyre.

But, seriously, there are many beautiful, dignified, and witty things in Mr. Gosse's new poems, and I like none better than the really impressive lines in which, dedicating his book to 'Tusitala in Vailima,' he refers to Mr. Stevenson's variegated life:

'By strange pathways God hath brought you,
Tusitala,
In strange webs of fortune caught you,
Led you by strange moods and measures
To this paradise of pleasures!

And the bodyguard that sought you
To conduct you home to glory,—
Dark the oriflammes they carried,
In the mist their cohort tarried,—
They were, Languor, Pain, and Sorrow,
Tusitala!'

And how happy is the adaptation of Mr. Stevenson's fancy of 'the Isle of Voices' to Samoa, with its imaginative picture of Moses in the person of Mr. Stevenson!—

'Fate hath chosen, but the choice is
Half delectable, half tragic,
For we hear you speak, like Moses,
And we greet you back, enchanted,
But reply's no sooner granted,
Than the rifted cloud-land closes.'

Drummond of Hawthornden: Ward's Edition.

DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN lives in literature rather by the picturesque beauty of his name than by the intrinsic merit of his poetry, real as that is. Drummond of Hawthornden! There is a pleasant murmur in the very syllables, as of the humming of bees on Mount Hybla. Drummond's was one of the four names, the reader will remember, which Lamb, with his arbitrary whimsicality of choice, spoke of as having that peculiar 'perfume in the mention'—Marlowe, Drayton, and Cowley being the others. Of these three, Drummond's new editor, Mr. Ward, considers that Marlowe alone stands higher than his chosen poet. To this, though editorial exaggeration of this kind is but human and proper, admirers of Drayton and Cowley will certainly demur. And when Mr. Ward goes on to say that in his sonnets 'he runs Sidney hard, if he do not at times outstrip him,' lovers of those 'Sidneian showers of sweet discourse' can hardly be expected to hold their peace. For Drummond was, notoriously, a disciple of Sidney's, and yet, with this advantage to begin with, and so poignant a theme as the sudden death of his betrothed (to whom he remained faithful for some fifteen years) to inspire him, is there any one of his sonnets, however fine in diction or curious in invention, that does more than echo the great passion that vibrates through almost every line of *Astrophel and Stella*? Besides, when Drummond is at his finest, you are almost sure to discover that he is adapting, or merely stealing or translating, the good things of greater

than himself, for he was an industrious reader, and particularly, as we would say, an 'amateur' of the belles-lettres of his day.

For example, how strikingly original seem these lines descriptive of dawn :

> 'And Phœbus in his chair,
> Ensaffroning sea and air,
> Makes vanish every star;
> *Night like a drunkard reels*
> *Beyond the hills to shun his flaming wheels,*'

till we remember two almost identical lines from *Romeo and Juliet*:

> 'And fleckèd darkness like a drunkard reels
> Forth from Day's path and Titan's fiery wheels.'

Again, in taking farewell of his love, Drummond unblushingly appropriates one of the most famous of Sidney's lines, written in the same mood of renunciation —the beautiful, 'Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust.'

In Drummond we have the sentiment and words all but identical :

> 'O leave that love which reacheth but to dust,
> And in that love eternal only trust,
> And beauty, which, when once it is possest,
> Can only fill the soul, and make it blest.'

Drummond's indebtedness to his Italian masters, Petrarch, Guarini, and particularly Marini, can only be realised by study of the numerous parallels, or rather originals, collected in Mr. Ward's learned and painstaking notes.

Yet, if it be admitted that Drummond allowed himself

a free hand in picking the brains of his contemporaries and predecessors, he had, of course, the justification that he had also within himself the power of writing lines which poets to come would, in their turn, be glad to steal. For example, who can doubt that Gray owed much of his famous line to Drummond's 'Far from the madding worldling's hoarse discords'? And I seem to trace Drummond's influence in the form of Mr. Patmore's odes in *The Unknown Eros.* For all his borrowing, which was, after all, 'the noble practice of the time,' Drummond was a considerable poet in his own right, and at times he is certainly a very sweet one. Grief has seldom found a tenderer voice than in the first 'song' of the second part of his poems, wherein he mourns the death of his mistress. Again, like his contemporaries, he is singularly moved to impressiveness at the spectacle of the transitoriness of life and the great mutations of history. There are few finer sonnets in English than that beginning:

> 'I know that all beneath the moon decays,
> And what by mortals in this world is brought,
> In Time's great periods shall return to nought.'

Of Drummond's personal character Mr. Ward draws a more favourable portrait than Ben Jonsonians, at any rate, remembering Drummond's somewhat ungenerous notes of Ben's conversations with him, will be likely to accept; yet, whatever side we take in this famous controversy, the debt of all lovers of the Elizabethans to Drummond for his personalities, or rather Ben Jonson's personalities, is beyond exaggeration.

THERE is an artless spontaneity about Lady Lindsay's verse which makes it refreshing just now when literary self-consciousness is in danger of degenerating from the proper, controlled, and concealed self-consciousness of the artist, into the absurd, parading self-consciousness of the dandy. Yet, needless to say, artlessness has its dangers, no less than self-consciousness. Each must be governed by at once an instinctive and a trained spirit of art. The poet should sing less like Tennyson's linnet than Browning's wise thrush, who, it will be remembered, sang his songs *twice* over, in a spirit of true artistic self-consciousness. To sing *but* as the linnet sings is possible but to very few highly inspired poets, such as Blake, in whom even absurdities have a way of seeming beauties, like a little child's babble. His songs, so to say, are often the baby-talk of genius. Artlessness and artistic carelessness are, however, two very different things; and the tragic example of their confusion is Mrs. Browning, the great body of whose poetry is mere idle expense of spirit, escaping as soon as born from the perishable forms into which that poet, the linnet-singer *par excellence*, carelessly breathed them. We are getting somewhat tired of the words 'distinction' and 'style,' and, of course, work that has nothing else is futile—though I confess to having met with scarcely any work that had real distinction and style that had not 'matter' as well: mock-distinction and mock-style are different things—yet the lesson is one we sorely needed

Lady Lindsay: 'The King's Vigil,' etc.

teaching, and, none the less, the truth remains—that little matter and much art are more efficient proportions in literature than that 'more matter with less art' which, in the true spirit of royal philistinism towards artistic things, the Queen of Denmark demanded from Polonius.

Lady Lindsay's poems exhibit both the true artistic artlessness and the false artistic carelessness. She is sometimes slipshod; her rhymes on occasion tearfully betray the fact that they are where they are, not because they really wished to be, but merely to hold a decent veil before a momentary nakedness of thought; then, too, Lady Lindsay is now and again sentimental, or, at any rate, she treats outworn themes for which no other treatment but that of outworn sentimentality is possible. She should not, for example, sing of ball-rooms and their tragedies, should not ask of her sister:

> 'What did you see at the ball, O sister?
> What did you see at the ball?'

The ballroom has once and for ever found its poet, and Lady Lindsay cannot hope to rival the excruciating pathos of 'After the Ball is Over'—which I confess to preferring to her poem on the subject! Nor should she write poems to 'Father Time.' It is like calling Mr. Gladstone the Grand Old Man. Besides, Time is long since proved a mere child—with, perhaps, Mr. Whistler for his father. Nor, to make an end of fault-finding, should Lady Lindsay permit herself to write a verse such as this:

> 'In convent garden worked S. Dol;
> Afeared of neither wind nor Sol—
> His fair hair blown to aureole.'

'Sol' as a forlorn rhyme-name for the sun had, I thought, been proscribed from use even in humorous verse, where bad poetic fashions linger longest, just as one is forbidden to write in prose of 'the orb of day,' or 'the majestic luminary of the heavens.' Then, too, 'aureole' does not rhyme with Sol and S. Dol, while the meaning of 'blown to aureole' is not too clear. Moreover, the name of the blessed saint is unfortunate. But now, having made so bad a beginning, I am about, like Falstaff, to make a good end, and say how much, in spite of such easily removable blemishes, I have enjoyed Lady Lindsay's verses. Blame, unfortunately, bulks more than praise. It is, so to say, measured by avoirdupois, praise by troy weight.

I cannot do better than quote two or three more verses from this Legend of S. Dol — 'Told in the Orchard'—a singularly beautiful legend in itself, and certainly not less so in Lady Lindsay's telling. S. Dol was the youngest of the brethren at a certain monastery, and was beloved above them all for his extreme gentleness. His saintliness was already bright about him:

'And when he paced the flowery sod
He smiled, as Enoch smiled who trod
Primeval fields, and walked with God.

One day—it was at hot noontide—
His spade full long S. Dol had plied—
He cast his hooded cape aside.

He softly laid and spread it where
The white boughs of a blossomed pear,
Like ship's sails, stretched in balmy air.

Scarce had he done this, when a bird
Among the leaves beside him stirr'd;
A tiny wren he saw and heard.'

Seeking a place to build, and undismayed by the presence of the gentle saint, she mistakes his hood for a nest, and lays her eggs therein. So, undisturbed by the saint and his brother-monks, she continues to feel at home in her odd nest:

'And there, unhurt, she bred her young
The smiling, awestruck monks among.
The legend flew from tongue to tongue

Through every nook of Normandy:
And all who could came forth to see
The hooded cape, the fruited tree.'

The cynical may suggest that, had not St. Dol been a saint, so great a fuss would not have been made about a pretty incident which not infrequently happens to undistinguished old hats in English orchards. But such an unhallowed reflection is no criticism on the beautiful simplicity with which Lady Lindsay tells the story, and the air of monastic serenity and gentleness which breaks like a blessing from each quiet, charming verse.

Of Lady Lindsay's other poems I like best her sonnets. The sonnet has always a salutary influence on a poetical talent prone to excessive lyricism, as perhaps Lady Lindsay's talent is. It is good for her art, I think,

'to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground.'

She has plenty of impulse and instinct, and it is rather

in the qualities of restraint, proportion, and selectiveness, which the sonnet above all forms encourages, that she is apt, occasionally, to be found wanting. One of her best sonnets is this, 'Of Music':

> 'Say, whence comes Music? Dwells she in the lyre,
> Rocked by deep strings? And prisoned, hid in wood,
> Sweet Dryad-like, sings she from out the rood
> Of lute or viol, nor of song can tire,
> But bids her voice again herself inspire—
> Sometimes with merry, oft with plaintive mood—
> Immortal since yon day when old Pan stood
> And through the rushes breathed poetic fire?
>
> Came she a fragment hurtling downward when
> Storm shook the firmament—a fallen star
> From heavenly shrine, for ever, though so far
> Thrilling in unison with choirs above?
> Or found she first her birth in souls of men,
> Who, ere they called her "Music," named her "Love"?'

Frank Harris: 'Elder Conklin,' etc.

It seems a little curious that a man who can write such stories as those contained in the volume *Elder Conklin and other Stories*, should prefer, for the most part, to devote himself to journalism. Admirable editor of the *Fortnightly Review* as Mr. Frank Harris proved himself, there are no doubt other editors to be found equally vigorous and intrepid; but there are certainly few men writing just now who could have written his stories. No doubt it is Mr. Harris's passion for action, for taking part in the actual shoulder to shoulder

struggle of humanity, that leads him to militant journalism as the nearest approach to that ideal. His stories are full of admiration of the quiet, strong man who never talks about what he is going to do, but just does it with a grim laconicism, and never talks about it afterwards. Nearly all his heroes are of this type, but the finest of them all is Elder Conklin. A figure more impressive in his simple dignity I have seldom met in fiction. In the wrong to start with, pig-headed and hopelessly unreasonable, yet as the old man stands in his fields — or rather the fields which he had illegally enclosed from the Indian territory — leaning upon his shot-gun, single-handed, against a dozen of the United States Cavalry who have come to dispossess him, tear up his fences, and burn his crops, you forget all about his original injustice and the comic stupidity of his resistance (as at first it seems), and see but a touching figure of forlorn and desperate courage, prepared to die, with an animal-like doggedness, to defend house and home. From an ignorant old Western farmer he becomes transformed into 'some village Hampden'; and when, having gained his point, he goes back to his wood-chopping without a word, you get some glimpse of the stern stuff that, as Whitman would say, has gone to the making of 'these States.' You seem to understand the great, strong men of the world the better for having seen simple old Elder Conklin.

Mr. Frank Harris's presentation of him has just his own qualities of reticence and strength. He simply puts him before us, without comment or limelight of

any description. He hardly allows himself a smile. Elder Conklin can stand alone in fiction, as he did that day in his field. There is no need to emphasise him. Mr. Harris just leaves him to speak for himself, and when he does speak, as with all men of few words, how quaintly to the point!

'"I regret that I've orders," said the polite young lieutenant, "to pull down your fences and destroy the crop. But there's nothing else to be done."

'"Yes," said the Elder gravely. "I guess you know your orders. But you mustn't pull down my fence," and as he spoke he drew his shot-gun in front of him, and rested his hands upon the muzzle, "nor destroy this crop." And the long upper lip came down over the lower, giving an expression of obstinate resolve to the hard, tanned face.'

This atmosphere of grim imperturbability in moments of 'life and death,' the terrible waiting stillness only broken at length by pistol-shots, is also wonderfully conveyed in the fine story of 'The Sheriff and his Partner,' and more or less in all Mr. Harris's western stories. Two of the stories deal with more civilised types and conditions. Of these, 'Gulmore the Boss' and 'A Modern Idyll,' the latter is a particularly subtle study of character. The psychology of the Rev. Mr. Letgood is wonderfully studied. But clever as it is, 'Elder Conklin' seems to me the triumph of the book, by the greater impressiveness of its interests. When the art of two stories is equal, theme is the determining factor in their comparative importance—and the simpler motives must always be the greater in art.

A. C. Swinburne: 'Studies in Prose and Poetry.'

IT has often struck me as curious that when we are engaged in lamenting the presence of no great authoritative literary critic in our midst, as, since the death of Matthew Arnold, we must sometimes do, no one mentions the name of Mr. Swinburne. Perhaps the reason is not hard to find. We are apt to regard Mr. Swinburne in his critical essays as a panegyrist rather than a critic. His not to weigh and measure with careful, and perhaps somewhat grudging, hand; not his to register the niceties of relation, the somewhat less and the somewhat more; but his to seek out in a writer the essential excellence of his genius and celebrate it, as all true excellence should be celebrated, high as the sky. His pleasure in criticism is to do as Mr. Stevenson has said the true poet will do in regard to life generally—to find out 'the joy' and 'give it a voice beyond singing.' He is not an appraiser, but—a praiser. Never did any man give himself up so completely to 'the noble pleasure of praising.' His criticism might truly be described as lyrical. Lyrical criticism! And how noble a thing it is! how much nobler than that criticism which cannot see the sun for the spots! Mr. Swinburne has from time to time betrayed an uncertain temper, but on only one occasion has he been, as it seems to me, deliberately and wantonly unjust. Never for a moment —in his printed criticism, at any rate—has he allowed personal rivalry to distort his appreciation of talents different from, yet equal to, his own. From his pen in

his early *Essays and Studies* came the finest tribute to Matthew Arnold, his poetical antithesis, that the poet of 'Thyrsis' has ever received, or is likely to receive, in prose. Of the one unhappy exception to this genial rule I am reminded by a new volume of his collected contributions to the reviews.

Opening his *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, and eagerly glancing down the contents list, it gave me a stab of pain to find that Mr. Swinburne had been so ill-advised as to include his famous, or infamous, essay on 'Whitmania.' As a part of the literary history, or rather gossip, of the time, one has a certain bookish interest in finding it preserved; but as a contribution to literary criticism it is a disgrace to the distinguished poet who in a moment of irritation gave it birth, and, it would appear, in a spirit of obstinacy, has thus, by printing it in a permanent form, perpetuated an insult to a great man whom he once delighted to honour. One is not sorry, of course, for Whitman. His works do follow, and fight for, and win for him. One is sorry for Mr. Swinburne. I think that, when the dumb hour clothed in black brings the dreams about his bed, the first literary sin for which Mr. Swinburne will beg absolution will be the writing of this 'Whitmania,' and the second, still greater, that of reprinting it in cold blood.

I was recently at a performance of *An Enemy of the People* in a great and ought-to-have-known-better provincial town, and several supposed-to-be intellectual ladies in the audience seemed to think that they disposed of Ibsen by the silly sneer that 'they were

not interested in drains.' They reminded me a little — I had the hardihood to tell them — of the old lady who tried to brush back the sea with her broom. King Canute tried the same experiment with his royal prerogative, it will be remembered; and long before that Cuchullin (or Cuculain, according to the latest Irish Literary Society spelling) had made hopeless war upon it with his mighty two-handed sword. So Mr. Swinburne makes war upon Whitman. Mud, however vigorously and plentifully thrown, though it may for a little while obscure, even obliterate, cannot destroy. The kindly rains of time will wash the statue clean again. So, however little he may like it, Mr. Swinburne may be quite certain that, if he is to inhabit Valhalla at all—and surely a distinguished throne in that great hall will be his—he will have to put up with the company of that 'orotund oratist of Manhattan,' 'loving well his sweetheart, relishing well his steak.' And, great and golden as Mr. Swinburne's throne will be, I am far from sure but that Whitman's will be not greater and brighter; for if he is not so 'mighty mouthed' an 'inventor of harmonies' as Mr. Swinburne, Whitman is a considerably greater Influence—one might almost say a Cosmic Influence—in the New World which is swimming into our ken. And, for his poetry—merely as poetry—there are some who make bold to think that it obeys a mightier law of rhythm than any anapæstic Swinburnian scheme; that, compared with Mr. Swinburne's daintily devised sonorities, Whitman's great measures are as though the rugged goat-foot Pan played, with intervals of huge

and monstrous laughter, against a pedantic shepherd-pipe. Pan hardly knows his notes! But the earth shakes and the little hills rejoice for all that.

No! Mr. Swinburne's mud has little chance of sticking upon Whitman's greatness. It has much more chance, maybe, upon his other pet aversion, Carlyle, whose name, with an elephantine humour, he will persist in translating to Diogenes Devilsdung—a German joke which Carlyle, needless to say, made first. One has no need to seek further than this essay for both components of that surname. The singer of perhaps the divinest song of death in the English tongue is befouled in a sentence such as this: 'The dirty, clumsy paws of a harper whose plectrum is a muck-rake'; and his brave athletic ideal of woman thus libelled in these now notorious words: 'Mr. Whitman's Eve is a drunken apple-woman, indecently sprawling in the slush and garbage of the gutter, amid the rotten refuse of her overturned fruit-stall; but Mr. Whitman's Venus is a Hottentot wench under the influence of cantharides and adulterated rum.' It is to be feared that Mr. Swinburne must have been under some such maddening influences when he allowed himself to be swirled off into such a welter of wild and wicked words! Such writing is not only silly and untrue, it is base; and, after the simple British Philistine fashion, his audience can but cry, 'Shame! shame!'

However, it is perhaps because we pay such eager heed to his noble praise that we, after all, disregard Mr. Swinburne's outburst of ignoble blame, as, when merely elephantine playful, we forgive his cumbrous

gambols of humour — the Bacon-Shakespeare skit, 'Tennyson or Darwin,' for instance, also unhappily reprinted in this volume. Fortunately, there is a great deal more praise than blame within its pages. There are noble tributes to Walter Scott, Professor Jowett, and Wilkie Collins. We have read them all in the *Fortnightly Review* and elsewhere, but it is good to read again such a salutation as this, which concludes Mr. Swinburne's note on Scott's Journal: 'While the language in which he wrote endures, while the human nature to which he addressed himself exists, there can be no end of the delight, the thanksgiving, and the honour with which men will salute, aloud or in silence, the utterance or the remembrance of his name.' Such praises of the Great Scott make us somewhat forgive Mr. Swinburne's silly abuse of the Little Scott, which happily is not reprinted. These *Studies* include the usual proportion of Hugo-worship—in fact, rather more than the usual; for of the two hundred and ninety-eight pages, one hundred and thirty-eight are devoted to Hugo's posthumous works. There is also an appreciation of *Les Cenci* (1883) written in French—which recalls the days when Mr. Swinburne wrote French lyrics as easily as English, and showered polyglot flowers upon the tomb of Gautier.

If I have seemed to dwell too much on the unworthy element in this fine volume of criticism, it is because so great a part of it proclaims Mr. Swinburne once more as, before and beyond all critics, the Prince of Praisers.

Frederick Wedmore: 'English Episodes.'

MR. WEDMORE'S art is very unobtrusive, reticence is of its essence, but what there is of it is real. His new stories, *English Episodes*, are, if anything, even more delightful than his *Renunciations*, though Mr. Wedmore's stories might all, more or less, be classed under that title. Mr. Wedmore loves to contemplate the grey romances, silver-grey, not dull blanched grey, of men and women who have renounced the dream of their lives, either from an impulse of duty, or from a sort of artistic sense, which forbids them to risk their dream by concrete embodiment—which, so to say, impels them to leave the passion-flower growing, after the manner of the heroine of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Such heroes and heroines are apt to be tiresome, to seem at times affectedly self-sacrificing—at any rate, to those who prefer their happiness in solid cash of concrete joys. Besides, it is not with them always a case of self-sacrifice. On the contrary, it is somebody else that is sacrificed, to satisfy the fastidious taste of these impressionist artists in life. In the opening story, for example, that of 'The Vicar of Pimlico,' it is not the Rev. Arthur Bradbury Wells, handsome enough and manly enough to suggest the Rev. Stopford Brooke, who sacrifices himself (though that, oddly enough, seems to be his view of the situation), but really Millicent Sergison who is sacrificed to his moral and spiritual colour-scheme. Mr. Bradbury Wells evidently loved Miss Sergison, with one of those fits of woman-hunger which will come over strong and sensitive men, whom some intellectual

or artistic interest has for some years made to forget women—as Shelley used to forget his meals; but he loved best his ideal of himself as a spiritual teacher. The monstrous question he first put himself was, Will Millicent Sergison be 'help or hindrance' to that? Then he decided to sacrifice Millicent Sergison to his spiritual egoism—he called it sacrificing himself. Duty is the last refuge of the subtlest egoism. It never seems even to have occurred to the Rev. Bradbury Wells that he was thus leaving Millicent a lonely hospital nurse—though he saw well she loved him, and admitted as much in a parting letter of triumphant priggishness. He kept his pity for himself, and had no thought, in his zeal for his duty, of a possible conflict of duties. Yet he is a fascinating person, for all that; a dignified if somewhat puzzling figure.

The story is particularly rich in Mr. Wedmore's characteristic apothegms. How terribly true is the reflection that 'most wide human experiences are denied to the plain'! Similarly, I have often thought how different life *must* be to a man with the name of Jones or Smith. Speaking of war nurses, the reverend amorist says, 'In war, when a man risks his life, a girl may risk her refinement.' Another of his deliverances is full of common-sense—indeed, of humour: 'The most arrant nonsense is talked about the poor. The poor are not exemplary, not even particularly deserving. Do you know, one day, I shall assert, in the pulpit, the claims of the rich—even the claims of the well-dressed. I myself like a well-made coat. I have one on at this moment, though it is too dark for you to see it. You will please

to take my word for it. A frock-coat, quite well cut, Millicent—and yet am God's creature.' How well chosen the moment for that gentle, insinuating 'Millicent'! Ah, the artful ecclesiastic! Mr. Wedmore makes one of those literal references to the literary personnel of the day which were characteristic of the *Renunciations*. His hero met Miss Sergison at an evening party, where he talked much to her, and went on talking, though some master played at the piano, 'until he saw that Mr. Pater was standing with bowed head and folded hands in exquisite politeness,' listening to ''E 's only jest so 'igh!'

Alfred Hayes: 'The Vale of Arden and other Poems.'

MR. ALFRED HAYES would seem to be one of those happy people who find this present earth enough. Of course, such contentment depends upon a man's or woman's circumstances. It is enough for Mr. Hayes that there are mountains and rivers, blue skies and billowy clouds. May the time be far distant when these shall cease to satisfy him, the day when he shall say, 'I have no pleasure in them'! Mr. Hayes has written more ambitious poems, such as 'The March of Man,' which have made for him a considerable reputation in those 'Midland Meadows' he sings, and in that Midland town where he dwells. But he has never given any such earnest of his poetical possibilities as in the small volume of verse which he has just published under the title of *The Vale of Arden and*

other Poems. The title will, no doubt, suggest that Mr. Hayes's passion is a Wordsworthian one. Mr. Davidson's 'greatness of the world' impresses Mr. Hayes not so much through woman, not at all, I should gather, in the joys of 'towered cities,' but in the peace that is among the lonely hills. This is made clear in his beautiful poem entitled 'My Study.' Mr. Hayes's study is Wordsworth's 'out-of-doors':

> 'The sun my work doth overlook
> With searching light;
> The serious moon, the flickering star,
> My midnight lamp and candle are;
> A soul unhardened is the book
> Wherein I write.'

Happy Mr. Hayes! 'lying in his garden,' as the old sybarite phrase ran, or lounging in his meadows, lapped in true Waltonian peace, with no fear of any 'bolt from the blue,' with nothing more dangerous near him than a few bleating lambs. Such perfect relation to our surroundings is the secret of human happiness. God should have made us all so. But Mr. Hayes, like Mr. Watson, has 'had his griefs,' or, at all events, his fears, as we learn from his lovely dedication to his wife—the most beautiful and significant poem in his volume, a poem in which it is good to see him aroused for a moment from his perhaps too easy Arcadian contentment. 'Thy love runs the fine second verse:

> 'Thy love, that lent
> Its morning breath to song, hath hushed
> My manlier lute;
> As birds that pipe when dawn is flushed,
> Or eve is wan, are mute
> At noontide of their full content.'

Strange though, and surely somewhat selfish, is the love that animates verses six and seven. Philip Marston's 'Not thou but I' struck a different, nobler note. But fine, again, is this verse, written in the shadow of death:

'Is love afraid
Of love's best friend? Is it to see
His picture wear
Its highest, holiest light, that He
Who painted love so fair
Has edged it with so deep a shade?'

Truly the shade is decorative—so long as the light still shines!

In the last verse we find Mr. Hayes back again in his contentment:

'I ask no life,
Beyond this homely earth, so God
The boon bestow
Of autumn calm, and, ere the sod
Receive us, days of snow
For closer nestling, faithful wife.'

At any rate, seems to be the moral of Mr. Hayes's sweet, restful song, the River Avon is a fact; let Schopenhauer do his worst. 'Avon's slumber song' may soothe our ears when living, and lull our rest when dead. Again I say, happy Mr. Hayes!

IN her new stories, entitled *Discords*, 'George Egerton' appears more definitely as the advocate of the New Woman than in *Keynotes*. She strikes me as more taken up with her mission, and less with her art. In four of them she herself seems to appear under thin disguises as a sort of Pioneer Club Sister of Mercy, comforting the oppressed and disillusioned victim of man and destiny—namely in 'Wedlock,' 'Her Share,' 'Gone Under,' and 'The Regeneration of Two.'

George Egerton: 'Discords.'

This overt propagandism is to be regretted—and her best stories have least of it, or, at any rate, have it more artistically blended with more central, human interest. In 'Wedlock,' 'Virgin Soil,' and 'Gone Under,' one has a feeling that the themes have not been chosen so much by imaginative impulse as by a conscious looking about for dramatic illustrations of the writer's social point of view. In 'Wedlock' and 'Virgin Soil,' the 'purpose' is all but naked. Both, it is true, preach sound doctrine (as I understand it), and both are powerfully wrought; but, to my thinking, the teaching is too obvious, and the power of that sordid, realistic kind which is not uncommon just now, and is not 'George Egerton's' peculiar *métier*. I trust that 'George Egerton' will not pursue her art in that direction, for in doing so she would be walking right away from her real gift: which is the telling of fairy tales—fairy tales, indeed, very different from the old happy, innocent fancies, fairy tales of real men and women tragically fore-doomed and fore-dowered, and

treacherously environed in a world where the music of the Venusberg and the song of the morning stars are strangely blended (hence the 'discord'!) with heredity for the wicked old witch at the christening. Fairy tales of the bad fairies of modern life—but none the less fairy tales in essence: for the basis of 'George Egerton's' art is poetry. She is a dreamer, and it is not her business merely to report and preach, as she does in the stories I have mentioned. She dreams in 'Her Share,' a gentle, pretty dream, and also in 'Gone Under,' in spite of its obvious lesson. Mrs. Grey is a wonderfully drawn figure, and the relationship between the two women exceedingly beautiful; the development of the whole thing, and the general treatment, background and detail, masterly. Above all, it has glamour—that gift without which all cleverness is naught. There was glamour in every story in *Keynotes*. There is no glamour in 'Wedlock' and 'Virgin Soil.' But we have it again in Parts I. and II. of 'A Psychological Moment at Three Periods.' The sketches of girl-life are as good as anything of the kind known to me. And what a fairy tale parable is that of the idiot-boy turning the merry-go-round hurdy-gurdy! I lose interest when the girl changes to the British Museum, well-able-to-take-care-of-herself young lady. But the 'big woman' is splendid. The best thing in the book, however, is 'The Regeneration of Two.' It is at once high romance and reasonable reality. There is no illusion; but there is—the dream. It preaches; but it lives and fascinates as well. It contains, too, some passages of charming prose-poetry. Indeed, as

in *Keynotes*, there are many such scattered about these stories. 'George Egerton,' I repeat, is properly a dreamer, a poet. May she be saved from being a mere realist and woman's-righter!

SPECIALISM has invaded even the realms of imaginative art. Just as a butterfly-fancier takes some infinitesimal subdivision of the lepidoptera for his love, so, nowadays, English novelists take some corner of the British Isles and industriously 'exploit' it. Mr. Hardy probably set the fashion by his single-minded studies of the flora and fauna of Wessex; Mr. J. M. Barrie followed, perhaps even more definitely inventing the idyllic *genre* for his Kirriemuir pathos and humour; then Cornwall has its 'Q.' The Channel Islands have recently found their novelist in Miss Ella D'Arcy, and Ireland has been enthusiastically 'run' by the Irish Literary Society—not to mention Mr. Kipling's annexation of India, and Mr. Gilbert Parker's discovery of Canada. It only remains for Mr. Ernest Rhys to give us Wales, and the ordnance survey of British fiction is complete. After all, these various writers have but followed the lead of all successful, of all great, writers; they speak of what they know. All writing worth reading is, directly or indirectly, autobiography. It is the record of something we have felt, done, or seen.

Walter Raymond: 'Love and Quiet Life.'

Some novelists I don't care to name, seeing the paying properties of local colour, take the club train to Ultima Thule, and after minutely studying its men and manners for a week, write great novels for which enthusiastic critics have no other name than epics or 'sagas.' For this kind of successful novel you have only to find a place with sufficiently bad hotels, and your fortune is made. Still, it may be safely prophesied that though such novels may be great booms for a time, they will be vainly asked for in eternity. Born of a commercial impulse, they die with its satisfaction. It is only the book born of an unselfish artistic impulse, the book written for the mere love of its theme, that lives. Kamschatka would no doubt make a good novel, but it would need a Kamschatkan to write it, somebody born in and truly in love with that dreary land. It is no use 'getting it up' in guide-books and gazetteers. No land tells its secrets to a gazetteer.

A true indigenous example of the topographical novel is Mr. Walter Raymond's *Love and Quiet Life*, perhaps the most beautiful book—if one may use the word 'beautiful' in an old-fashioned sense, as descriptive of a certain winning grace, a certain charm of the heart, which make the best part of the best beauty—outside poetry, published this year. Mr. Raymond describes his sketches and stories as 'Somerset Idylls,' and to a certain point he is obviously a disciple of Mr. Thomas Hardy. But, though his method has resemblances to Mr. Hardy's, it is very different in spirit. Mr. Hardy, with all his love for the countryside, sees it through a somewhat alien eye. He takes care to let you know

that he is deeply read in 'modern thought,' and he proves his provinciality by constantly insisting on his urbanity, his cosmopolitanism. Mr. Raymond is not so. He loves his countryside with a simple, yet far from undiscriminating, love. He probably knows as much about modern thought as Mr. Hardy, but he prefers to paint for us the simple ancient ways, without any attempt to gain piquancy by confronting them with modern contrasts. Mr. Hardy's favourite theme—and how fascinating and significant!—is the working of some new idea, the influence of some exotic personality, under long-established simple conditions. No tragic conjunction of circumstances is more common in every-day life, and certainly none is more fruitful of strange, unexpected results. Mr. Raymond gives us an occasional glimpse of the innovation of new ideas in his Somerset-shire village of Sutton, but the innovation is always seen to be momentary, and ineffective against the immemorial conventions and prejudices of the villagers. The fuse is laid and lit, but there is no explosion to speak of. After a little commotion, all settles back to its ancient way. Nothing long disturbs the cooing of the rectory doves, the murmur of Mother Sandboy's bees.

Sutton did, indeed, come into contact with person-alities it did not understand in the somewhat shadowy disappointed old Nonconformist minister James Burt and his daughter Marion; but these two gentle, quiet people were hardly masterful enough to influence its stubborn antiquity. While speaking of them, I must pause to say how beautiful is the situation in which

Marion Burt finds in an old box her father's love-letters, and, from them and a miniature, builds up an ideal of the dead mother she has never seen. In the new High Church parson Percival, Sutton found an innovator it did know how to deal with. With what successful doggedness it resisted his new hymn-book, and his attempt to interfere with the sexton's immemorial rights to feed his pigs and other 'stock' in the churchyard, I leave the reader to make amused discovery for himself.

The chapters with the strongest grip of life in them are those dealing with the simple annals of the Sandboys—a nondescript family, the patriarch of which, the 'girt-gran-dadder' of the story, had, years back, annexed a piece of the waste margin of the highroad, built a cottage, and reared his family, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, there, undisturbed and confident in his 'squatter's right.' The village always looked askance on these settlers as a kind of gipsyfolk. Besides, Grammer Sandboy was something of a witch, and there was a Bohemianism about John Sandboy which took the form of poaching honest Mr. John Culliford's rabbits. Of all the Sandboys one of the most dramatic is the youngest scion, Johnny Sandboy, who contributed to the family resources by scaring the crows and other damaging birds and beasts from Mr. Culliford's fields. Very proud were all the generations of his line when it was known that, quite unaided, he had, to minimise his personal exertions, made a wonderful scarecrow—'a vine mommet.'

It took the deaf and doting old man a long time to

fully understand the distinction which Johnny's cleverness had brought to the family, but when at last it burst upon him he summoned his vital forces for a great effort. He had not been known to walk through the village for years, but he could not die without seeing Johnny's 'mommet.' Consequently the villagers were startled one morning by the apparition of 'girt-gran-dadder' hobbling on two sticks to the field where the 'mommet' was on exhibition. I know no more touching incident in recent fiction, except it be that of the old man's death. The very title of the chapter is full of tears—'Girt-gran-dadder a-tookt'; and how touching and eerie is this picture of Grammer Sandboy's strange ceremony of 'telling the bees'!—

'The upstairs windows, small and square under the overhanging thatch, were as black as death; and underneath, by the row of bee-butts, dimly visible through the dusk, crouched Grammer.

'"She's a-tellen the bees." . . .

'The old woman passed from butt to butt, laying her lips close to the mouth of each.

'"The wold man's a-gone," she said. "The wold man's a-tookt to the last."'

Strange how the pathos of eternity sighs through these uncouth country words! But to realise how these 'z's' and 'v's' and cooing Somersetshire vowels can stir the heart, one should hear Mr. Raymond's wonderful recitations of Barnes.

William Watson: 'Odes and other Poems.'

A FASHION has only to be long enough out of fashion to be the very newest fashion. Every new fashion proves it. Every style has its resurrection, if it only waits patiently. Witness, say, the vogue of Jane Austen, of Mrs. Gaskell, of the eighteenth-century writers, of Mr. Hugh Thomson's illustrations, the Kelmscott Press editions, the renaissance of fairy tales, and the fame of Mr. William Watson's poems. For a long period Mr. Watson was like a star, and dwelt apart, an alien from the literary movements of his day; shrinking from the welter of romanticism and æsthetic 'intensity,' loving rather the traditional classic virtues of the great calm masters; and, as he contemplated their mighty works, involuntarily learning for his own poems some of their high tranquillity and dignified simplicity. 'If,' he writes to Mr. A. C. Benson, in his volume of *Odes and other Poems*,

> '. . . if our lute obey
> A mode of yesterday,
> 'Tis that we deem 'twill prove to-morrow's mode as well.'

Of course, the truth is that good work is always in fashion; and one of the first conditions of its existence is that the artist is true to his instincts, insists on admiring what he really does admire, on selecting from life and celebrating just those interests and aspects of it which alone awaken in him his artistic sense. At all times the critics have busied themselves in warning off the artist from his chosen theme, by declaring it out of date, or the vested interest of some supreme unapproach-

able master. No man who ever does anything in this world pays much heed to his critics. It is they who despise fashion that lead it. When Mr. Watson began to write, the pre-Raphaelite fashion — having had to fight its battle too—was in full swing. Mr. Watson's first volume shows that he also came strongly under its influence; but he was soon drawn to take other masters, and how well and wisely he has loved his Milton, his Gray, and his Wordsworth, each successive volume of his verse bears witness. On opening his new volume, with its dedicatory odes, it seems as though we have stepped into the eighteenth century, with its courtly familiar epistles, of elegant point and fastidiously chosen word. Surely it is a new volume by Mr. Prior or Mr. Gray. By the poet's mode of address we might take 'Richard Holt Hutton,' 'H. D. Traill,' and 'Arthur Christopher Benson' for forgotten writers of the last century, did we not, happily, entertain hopes of their being unforgotten writers of this. Further on, however, we encounter fuller music, loftier notes: lyrics, sonnets, and blank-verse, worthy of greater poets than Gray. I think there is more variety and wider range of interests in Mr. Watson's new volume than in any other of its predecessors, and, at any rate, Mr. Watson's own individual qualities of dignity and distinction are here in an ever easier perfection. Critics whose one method is to point out what a man's work has not, 'desiring this man's art and that man's scope,' find, after their kind, this and that lack in Mr. Watson's work. It lacks fire, maybe they say; but is 'fire' the only saving quality of verse? We might retort in

the words of Mr. Watson's own beautiful vindication of Wordsworth against similar never-to-be-satisfied objectors:

> 'What hadst thou that could make so large amends
> For all thou hadst not, and thy peers possessed?
> Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?
> Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.'

Rest! Surely it is the one gift we are all craving. Tired with problems, jaded with the ever more arduous work of the world, disillusioned or frustrated on every hand, the age, like a tired child, asks some one to sing to it, to tell it a story. Science with its trumpets has abased the cities of our dreams, and all we can do is to beg the poets and story-tellers to build them up again with their music. So we take refuge in *belles-lettres* and fairy tales.

THERE is no more striking instance of the new-fashioned reversion to old fashions, than the recent revival of mysticism. Mr. Edward Garrett may be right, and no doubt is right, about the Mahatmas; but, all the same, the Mahatmas undoubtedly supply a demand of the present-day mind. And, seriously, it would be all the nicer if we could believe in Mahatmas, or, at any rate, in the 'supernatural' theories of life for which they stand. To such theories science seems more and more powerless to oppose any effective criticism. It seems to have

Frederick Greenwood: 'Imagination in Dreams.'

busied itself in exiling what Isaac Disraeli called these 'dreams at the dawning of the philosophy,' for no other purpose than to make it possible for them all to troop home again, with rather more than less plausibleness to support them. Science pompously undertook to explain everything in their stead; but more and more it is being borne home to us that science is pretty well all talk, and that we are as near as ever to the explanation of those matters about which we most crave knowledge—perhaps not so near as some of the old banished philosophies brought us.

So sane a writer as Mr. Frederick Greenwood thinks that dreams even, the most despised and rejected of psychical phenomena, may prove worthy of serious study. The usual off-hand, pseudo common-sense explanations, it is the aim of his charming book on *Imagination in Dreams and their Study* to prove, are far from being so conclusive as has been glibly supposed. 'Even our digestion,' said Blake, 'is governed by angels'; and, properly understood, it is one of the profoundest criticisms on the materialistic position. Bad angels! no doubt the wag will hasten to say. Well, the bad and good angels of digestion, it has long been allowed, have much to do with dreams. But they equally have to do, pertinently observes Mr. Greenwood, with our waking thoughts, our day-dreams, our philosophies, which we take no less seriously on that account. All the most exquisite emotions of the human soul can be made ridiculous by material 'explanations' of this kind. 'We have reduced love,' says Lombroso, 'to the play of pistil and stamen!' Indeed! Grotesque, truly, in

certain moments, seems the human instrument on which the music of eternity is played; but surely, instead of that music being made the less wonderful, it is made the more. And if such strange, beautiful, and terrible visitations of the imagination as dreams may be brought about by the coarse agency of a heavy supper, surely they thus become the more strange. Mr. Greenwood, of course, attempts no interpretative philosophy of dreams. He merely ventures to suggest that such may some day be discovered; and that, meanwhile, nothing is gained by dismissing as mere 'bosh and nonsense' these curious phenomena. One service near home, he reminds us, they may, at least, do: by symptomising unhealthy states of the body before more obvious symptoms occur—disturbance and decay of internal function and organ. A dream often repeated, as dreams are, may thus, in this humble, unromantic fashion, be fairly regarded as a 'portent.' That dreams are occasionally portentous of more important matter Mr. Greenwood seems far from doubting. But perhaps it is in anticipating trifling circumstances that the strangeness of dreams becomes the more puzzling. That they should come to warn us of solemn issues, such as death, seems comparatively natural and dignified; but they resemble ghosts in usually taking and giving an infinity of trouble to tell us of some silly little thing that we should hardly have noticed without their mentioning it. For example, the other night a friend of mine dreamed that some one rushed out of a room adjoining his bedroom, and tumbled, with a great noise, down the stairs. The dream was so

vivid that he awoke. Next morning his housemaid stumbled, and fell down that very flight. As her ankle was sprained in the fall, some temporary domestic inconvenience resulted; but the occasion hardly seems serious enough to necessitate a dream leaving Jove's right hand, and travelling across the chill inane of space to announce it. Besides, even so, the announcement served no purpose. It did not prevent the poor housemaid falling downstairs.

Mr. Greenwood tells us a similar story of trivial prediction. One night he dreamed that he had made a business call, and, having been shown into a drawing-room, lounged with his arm along the mantelshelf. Presently his hand rested on something cold, and a shudder ran through him as he saw that the object he had touched was a woman's hand, newly cut from the wrist. He awoke in horror, but presently forgot the dream, and next day, unsuspiciously making a business call, was shown into a pretty little room, where he had never been before, adorned with various nick-nacks. Glancing at the mantelpiece, what should he see but the hand of a mummy broken from the wrist! It was a little hand, and, from its wearing a ring, Mr. Greenwood concluded it was a woman's. 'Coincidence,' Mr. Greenwood anticipates. Yet such purposeless coincidence rather adds another factor to the problem.

R. L. Stevenson: died Dec. 3, 1894.

OPENING with something of awe, as though it were a death-chamber, the second volume of the noble Edinburgh Edition of Mr. Stevenson's works, which, with sad appropriateness at the moment, includes the two books which first made us aware of him, ***An Inland Voyage*** and the ***Travels with a Donkey***, we come upon the gay preface to the former, wherein he tells us that, although the little book 'runs to considerably upwards of two hundred pages, it contains not a single reference to the imbecility of God's universe, nor so much as a single hint that I could have made a better one myself.' Though thus gaily expressed, here, on the very threshold of his literary career, had Mr. Stevenson struck the keynote of all his future books. It was a note of cheery, even at times merry, stoicism rather than optimism; but it was a brave, bracing philosophy to live by, and well has it served its master. Though he has had sickness for a more or less constant companion, no man ever tramped his pilgrimage of life with lighter heart or more resolute step. And sometimes, when his spirits fell, he just sang to keep them up. Thus his courage has availed to make of a life that brought him no very promising material to begin with, that most noble and valuable work of art, an admirable, full, and rounded existence. Sudden as Mr. Stevenson's death has been, none of us in our deepest grief can say that it has left his life incomplete. It is as perfectly finished as one of his own essays. Death, for once, has been an artist too, and

Mr. Stevenson's life ends as with one of his own golden cadences, which not even he himself could have bettered. It involuntarily recalls the grand close of *The Lantern Bearers*: 'Not only love, and the fields, and the bright face of danger, but sacrifice, and death, and unmerited suffering humbly supported, touch in us the vein of the poetic. We love to think of them, we long to try them, we are humbly hopeful that we may prove heroes also. We have heard, perhaps, too much of lesser matters. Here is the door, here is the open air. *Itur in antiquam silvam.*' How like a silver rim to an oaken drinking-horn is that bit of Latin against the fine, simple English! If Death knows his Stevenson, one can almost imagine his quoting these lines to our noble writer as he flung wide open for him the flaming door of the Infinite a few days ago: 'Here is the door, here is the open air. *Itur in antiquam silvam.*' The door, the open air, for which, with all the tranquillity and honours of his life, Mr. Colvin has told us he was beginning to long. He was, it would seem, growing a little tired of that road running 'long and straight and dusty to the grave,' for all the laurel trees that grew along its margins. Like a true artist and true lover, he dreaded the bathos of middle age.

I am not one of those who think that in Mr. Stevenson we have lost a very great novelist. I have always had an uneasy suspicion that the fame of *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and the other romances (not, indeed, the essays!), written *virginibus puerisque*, was something of a beautiful bubble that would some day burst. I

have ventured to regret that Mr. Stevenson should continue to squander his great gifts upon the British boy, who cares as much about style as a pig about asparagus. The comparisons with Scott were, of course, friendly exaggerations, though it is possible that they may have done Mr. Stevenson the unintentional ill-service of diverting him from the true path of his genius. Mr. Stevenson, like most of us, sought an escape from the grinding materialism of the day, and he found it, for the most part, in the gallant world already created for him by Scott.

Scott, indeed, had created it somewhat as an escape for himself, and Mr. Stevenson played at being border-raider, Jacobite, and pirate just as his master had done before him. He played the brave old costume-game well, but, so far as literature is concerned, it was little more than a well-timed revival; and, to my thinking, the true Stevenson is not there. What Mr. Stevenson might have done—and what a service it would have been!—would have been to revive the picaresque romance, the romance of the road, beginning nowhere, ending nowhere, with now and again a strange, a quaint adventure, and ample space for the writer to digress as the whim seized him. A story-teller he certainly was, but rather a teller of episodes, sandwiched in with whimsical reflection, or leisurely description. His two sentimental journeys with the canoe and the donkey prove how well fitted he was for this meandering style of narrative; and his fantastic stories, such as the unsurpassable *New Arabian Nights*, show with what spirited episodes he might have furnished it. Defoe

set him on the wrong track. His first master, Sterne, was a better guide, and Le Sage and Cervantes were waiting to claim him as a son.

For Mr. Stevenson is, *par excellence*, one of those writers with whom the theme matters little and the writer everything. Such writers are like good talkers. We do not care what they talk about, nor even what they say. We just want to hear them talk. Happily, Mr. Stevenson has thus talked on for us in many an entrancing book. I have often ventured to express my conviction that it is not as a novelist, but as an essayist, poet, and fantastic romancer, that Mr. Stevenson really counts. He is first of all a *writer*. His prose is precious for its own sake, apart from its theme, like the prose of Sir Thomas Browne, Lamb, or Hazlitt. We read it over and over again, for sheer delight in its strength and beauty, as we look again and again at a picture for its purely æsthetic qualities. Some have objected against Mr. Stevenson's prose, as they did against Mr. Pater's, that it is lacking in thought, in intellectual depth. When hostile critics have done all else against a man, they always fire this off as a last shot. Tennyson suffered from the same sneer, to Browning's advantage, simply because he could express his thoughts clearly, and Browning left his in a puzzle which had the look of profundity. Think clear and write clear, so that readers can look deep down into your thought, and you are sure to be accused of shallowness. It is only the puzzle-head and the pundit who are considered profound. The deepest thinkers are always the simplest, and Stevenson was one of the

simplest. He soon realised that the only end of the thinking faculty was to lead us to give up thinking, and to prove that a life of honest, simple pleasures, with dreams for holidays, was the one life worth living. The most casual, trivial contact with his fellows was constantly evoking from him stirring and fascinating expressions of this simple wisdom. Could anything seem less momentous than a meeting with a merry Belgian boating-club, young men just released from the day's business? Yet a chance remark of one of them —'We are all employed in commerce during the day; but in the evening, *voyez-vous, nous sommes sérieux*' —was enough to inspire our inland voyager with one of those passages which are momentous indeed in the life of his readers. 'They were all employed,' he comments, 'over the frivolous commercial concerns of Belgium during the day; but in the evening they found some hours for the serious concerns of life. I may have a wrong idea of wisdom, but I think that was a very wise remark. . . . The nightmare illusion of middle age, the bear's hug of custom gradually squeezing the life out of a man's soul, had not yet begun for these happy-starred young Belgians. . . . To know what you prefer, instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive.'

It was because Mr. Stevenson knew how thus to keep his soul alive that he became something like a great writer of English prose. No one ever paid less heed to the literary fashions and sententious tittle-tattle of his time. His health, providentially, saved him from

living for long in the Lilliput of literary London. He knew what he preferred. He wanted to get out of it all and write great books. It was his happiness to be able to do so, and it will be his distinction not to be buried in Westminster Abbey. In no such crowded necropolis is his resting-place; but he lies asleep upon the hill of Vaea, over against Vailima, the hill that looks across the boundless Southern Sea. To sentimentalise upon graves becomes happily more and more impossible in a day when we cremate our dead and build their mausoleums in our memories; yet we may, without grandiose reference to Moses, see in the place of Mr. Stevenson's burial an inspiring symbol of the life, strongest, as Ibsen has told us, when most alone, the life exalted above the mean every-day levels, and with high heart and expectant eye turned ever towards the Infinite and the Eternal.

Robert F. Murray: 'Poems.'

THE late Mr. Robert F. Murray, whose poems Mr. Andrew Lang has just edited, was one of those rare, quiet men who do the world, its successes and its honours, the great service of ignoring them. He belongs to the noble army of so-called 'failures.' One does not mean to imply that 'success,' as usually understood, is necessarily ignoble, any more than to imply that failure is by any means always something to be proud of. Good

men sometimes succeed, as bad men sometimes fail. Failure may be due occasionally to weakness rather than to strength. A man may fail through an unwise love for drink, as he certainly may through an unwise love for honour and fairplay. The Temple of Contemporary Fame is seldom entered with head erect. Most men enter it crawling abjectly on hands and knees, and laden with bribes for the priests. While making these highly creditable reflections, one must not forget that we live in an imperfect world, where, if we are to feed and clothe our families, we are obliged to exercise the gentle art of compromise: but there is a difference between compromise and self-contempt. Murray, however, was one of those who refused to see the difference. So he did not 'succeed' in Fleet Street. Besides, he had a genuine indifference to fame, and was quite content to be known as the poet of his university town of St. Andrews—for which he had one of those quixotic human affections that are the surest hindrances to success. To love anything better than yourself—wife, child, city, or pursuit—is the first law of failure. Murray loved St. Andrews not wisely. He could not settle or work away from it. After unsuccessful attempts to live elsewhere, he returned to it again and again. Such unpractical attachments to provincial centres of learning should perhaps be the privileges only of those whose love is fed with fellowships. A man with his way to make in the world cannot afford such whimsies. But, supposing Murray an unattached man, what is there to be said against his choice, his choice of that quiet, meditative exist-

ence, devoted to simple interests, and content with simple rewards? 'Study to be quiet,' admonishes Walton at the end of his book so full of lovely quiet. And the power of being 'quiet' is no small element of greatness. Yet, as ever with the lover of books and the maker of them, Murray's inner life was full and fervid, and the poems which Mr. Lang has brought together, and to which he has contributed a memoir which is one of his very best pieces of editorial work, strike deeper notes of the human heart than even his songs of *gaudeamuses* and 'wasters' and other college joys and sorrows.

Indeed, the greater number of them are occupied with that so simple and so complex theme of all but the whole of the world's poetry, just 'the love of simple, natural persons.' He had a fine eye for a pretty woman, and no doubt a merry one. There is a touch of seventeenth-century perfection in this description of the poet's love 'At a High Ceremony':

'Not the proudest damsel here
Looks so well as doth my dear.
All the borrowed light of dress
Outshining not her loveliness,

A loveliness not born of art,
But growing outwards from her heart,
Illuminating all her face,
And filling all her form with grace.

Said I, of dress the borrowed light
Could rival not her beauty bright?
Yet, looking round, 'tis truth to tell,
No damsel here is dressed so well.'

How charmingly is the situation, with its piquant

possibilities, hit off in this stanza of 'A Lost Opportunity'!—

'One dark, dark night—it was long ago,
The air was heavy, and still, and warm—
It fell to me and a man I know
To see two girls to their father's farm.'

But Murray's love-songs, for the most part, suggest the unsatisfied incompleteness which marks the rest of his life. There is a wistfulness even in his gayest verses, and *vanitas vanitatum* is written, in spite of himself, across his very joys:

'I feel so lonely,
I long once only
To pass an hour
With you, O sweet!
To touch your fingers,
Where fragrance lingers
From some rare flower,
And kiss your feet.

But not this even
To me is given.
Of all sad mortals
Most sad am I,
Never to meet you,
Never to greet you,
Nor pass your portals
Before I die.'

Such is the burden of his love-songs. A haunting sense of loneliness sighs through them all, as in this solemn little lyric of 'Hope Deferred':

'When the weary night is fled,
And the morning sky is red,
Then my heart doth rise and say,
"Surely she will come to-day."

In the golden blaze of noon,
"Surely she is coming soon."
In the twilight, "Will she come?"
Then my heart with fear is dumb.

When the night wind in the trees
Plays its mournful melodies,
Then I know my trust is vain,
And she will not come again.'

But in Murray's small book of verse many other notes than these are struck. His *vers de société*, Mr. Lang, not without reason, is inclined to rank higher than that of Calverley or J. K. S., 'endowed,' as he was, 'with their humour, their skill in parody, their love of youth, but (if I am not prejudiced) with more than the tenderness and natural magic of these regretted writers.' His epigram on critics and minor poets, neatly entitled 'A Coincidence,' is worthy of Prior:

'Every critic in the town
Runs the minor poet down;
Every critic—don't you know it?—
Is himself a minor poet.'

Murray died at the age of thirty. Had he lived he must undoubtedly have made a considerable name for himself as a poet. He could not have long continued to hide his light under the bushel of St. Andrews, and, as it is, he will, I venture to believe, be known as something more than 'the Poet of "The Scarlet Gown."' His verses, as Mr. Lang says, are full of natural magic; they bear, too, the classical stamp. When poetry has both it can never quite die. The world at large may forget it, but there will always be a warm corner for it in the heart of the student of poetry; that is to say, a warm corner in the warmest heart.

'*Two Essays on The Remnant*, by John Eglinton.' The Remnant! Could anything be at once more mysterious and yet more 'important'? To me, I confess, the title suggested nothing beyond vague Judaic adumbrations, the Lost Tribes and so forth. It was so Carlyle must have mystified the readers of the *London Magazine* with *Sartor Resartus*; and, indeed, Mr. John Eglinton has evidently learned something in his method from Carlyle, though he writes a more normal prose. In reviewing, one looks before one leaps. Opening *The Remnant* on an early page, I read, 'Necessity is a great ally,' and again, 'It takes genius to be honest: hence the lies on tombstones.' The man has wit, and yet is wise! Again I dipped: 'So, one fine morning, in sheer despair, I walked out of London; and that evening found me already far away down a western highroad, recovering my spirits at every step. A planet, mistress of that season, hung above my path; and when the next morning dawned, I had deviated, without knowing it, into an unknown land, full of meditative hollows, where I remained for a summer, catching my food in the stream and sleeping below the wood-pigeons.'

John Eglinton: 'Two Essays on The Remnant.'

He has, too, the beautiful secret of beautiful prose! So then, having looked long enough, I leaped, and found in a despised and rejected little pamphlet, which had been kicking about my desk for weeks, quite a treasure of wonderful things, even wiser, wittier, and more beautiful than those I have quoted.

First, what is this mysterious Remnant? Briefly, Mr.

Eglinton thus describes the Unemployed Idealists of the community, as also those idealists, artists, literary men and others, who gain their livelihood by catering, in however sincere and honourable a fashion, for a civilisation with which they have no sympathy—to which, in fact, they are entirely antagonistic. These Chosen People in our modern Egypt Mr. Eglinton invites to that mystic wilderness—wherever it may lie—where alone they can develop those germs of spiritual advancement with the sacred care of which they are charged. 'For why,' he asks (and answers), 'is it better, at each climax of civilisation, that the Chosen People should be gone? Because, while remaining in a system of things in which they have no longer any real concern, they are an anomaly in nature; for once man is glamoured with the thought of the wilderness he becomes indifferent. He is no longer a good citizen, and he infects with his indifference those who should be so.' Idealists in their wrong environment, he argues, are responsible for our modern social discontents. Had only some modern Moses and Aaron headed a 'peaceable withdrawal of idealists into the wilderness, there would have been no oppression in store for them and no uneasy dreams for the Pharaoh of civilisation. The French Revolution was only the first of the great plagues.' Mr. Eglinton anticipates, though I am not sure that he answers, the criticism that surely the place of the leaven is in the dough. If the idealists of a nation leave it in a body, wherewith shall it be salted? his Mr. Eglinton admits.

'Yet,' he says, 'there comes a time when the Chosen People and the State, if either are to fulfil the conditions of their existence,

must take different ways—when Moses, or in our own time Thoreau, Whitman, Tolstoï, and others, appear, to call them forth to build in the wilderness the City of God. That is the period when the external application of ideas is become impossible, when the progress of the State comes to a standstill, when all development is individual and a Remnant is formed. Come forth, say then, these prophets, you that believe or have good hope, ye have sown, now you must reap! Come forth, you that are quickened with that most ancient and most modern faculty by which men enjoy *themselves*! As your strength languishes without toil, so your wills languish without belief! Come forth and inherit your ideas, and live the great life beneath sun and moon!'

In other words, those national fertilisers—the idealists, the poets, and men and women of genius generally—have done their work for the present. All the ideas they have at present to sow have blossomed and borne fruit, and their decadence is already here. The time has thus come for the idealists to go apart, and, open to the unobstructed influences of the spiritual powers, become themselves fertilised for diviner sowings. At present they are in danger of submitting to the only essential slavery, that 'in which the mind consents to labour for the body'—a fine definition and a tragic!

One would not, of course, dream of arguing with Mr. Eglinton, or, should one not rather say that he himself would be above argument? The poet, said Whitman, is no arguer: he is judgment. And Mr. Eglinton is that most cussed combination, a poet-mystic. Therefore—need one say?—he is individualist of individualists. In London 'for two dark years' he tried hard 'to catch on as a citizen.' But 'a heavy price the gods exact for citizenship.' So he retired from 'that rude civic struggle, whose progress we cumbered and still

cumber,' impressed with the fallacy of majorities, the absurdity that a nation is greater than its greatest man. While Europe, as the phrase goes, is 'one armed camp,' 'the best persons in each nation are finding the best range for their true activities in a life of thought. Instead of being incredibly superior to each of its units, the State is now centuries behindhand.' 'Civilisation has in its start and growth the natural, inevitable beauty of a plant, or a girl,' begins a beautiful passage I must forbear to quote; but when the rouge-pot has to be called in, what then? 'A city is nature's doing, and London her hugest flower by the river's brim, but primroses are preferable when London begins to run to seed.' Civilisation is a failure, 'not because it is a scheme erected by man in the teeth of nature, but because nature is no longer in it as a coherent whole.' 'She subsists, nevertheless, and with concentrated energy, in the individual, who drops away and rolls off by himself to the wood or the seashore with a swelling potentiality of thought in his bosom.'

Wordsworth, 'first and greatest of the Unemployed,' is the Moses of Mr. Eglinton's silent exodus, Wordsworth 'whose name,' he prettily says, 'was as a far-fluttering unattainable carol to me in my prison.' It was Wordsworth who first called him forth on to 'the open road.' The reader will be particularly delighted with the beautiful pages descriptive of Wordsworth's walking, as a 'tall North-country youth,' the streets of London, of whose decadence Mr. Eglinton has previously spoken as 'the prolonged decay of that great celandine.' His caustic criticism of Goethe is still finer in another vein. He

regards him as an idealist who has betrayed idealism, the 'Joseph in Egypt' who 'by reason of his prosperity' has 'become indirectly the cause of the captivity of his brethren.' He 'discovered, at a time when the atmosphere of Europe was unduly charged with ideas, and threatened to enter the life of each man with disastrous consequences to society, the vast capacities of art as an absorbent medium. He was nothing less than the Franklin of idealism, whose discovery withdrew the excess of ideas from the air, and made them, what they had scarcely been before, agents of civilisation. . . .' 'As with a thousand articles of smallware,' he runs on, with delightful irony, 'puppets, engravings, pencils, and what not—so the best thoughts may still be said to bear the impress, "made in Germany." They are made there out of the carcases of old books, in a way somewhat like that which Virgil divulges for the manufacture of bees. . . . If you would know how beautifully pedantry plays into the hands of poetry, go to one of the thought-raising districts of Germany. . . .'

Mr. Eglinton draws a vivid warning picture of the state and the fate of the poet and literary man under the Roman emperors. Such, he prophesies, is the state, and is likely to be the fate, of the poet and the literary man, the Remnant, in our present civilisation. They are daily selling their birthright for the mess of pottage. 'Life has not been to them what they bargained for; civilisation has been too much for them—circumstances over which they had no control. The gods, at least, have not loved them.' 'And,' concludes Mr. Eglinton, in a strain of beautiful prose music, 'at length some dry-

eyed poet, glancing sidelong and half in fear at the watching heavens, once so blue and fortunate to his early vision, pens a last blasphemy of them, and, leaving his tablets behind him and covering his eyes, hurries down into the way of death.'

I have quoted so much, that I hesitate to quote more, but Mr. Eglinton is one of those writers who can only be introduced by quotation. His essays, interesting as they are for their whimsical social criticism, are, first of all, interesting as prose. Merely to disengage that social criticism would be to treat a work of art as though it were a manual of economics. How futile were it, for example, to attempt any account of Sir Thomas Browne by merely tabulating the articles of his theology, or by merely telling the reader of the colour and sonority of his prose! Nothing but samples of the gold-and-purple stuff itself will avail. The same applies, of course, to all writing that is really *written*—to De Quincey, Lamb, Pater, and Stevenson. One might add Thoreau, by whom both in thought and in style Mr. Eglinton has evidently been influenced. And it applies to Mr. Eglinton also; for, if I am not very much mistaken, we have in his little book one of the finest pieces of prose written in English for some years. Nor is it fine only in passages. The whole is so harmoniously proportioned. As the essay (for the two essays are really one) moves through all the developments of its quaint argument, and the changes of its rich music, one is reminded of the stately proportions of Milton's pamphlets—of the *Areopagitica*, which was once a little, unheeded pamphlet such as this. To praise

a living writer is far more dangerous than to blame him. Then one fears lest he may embarrass the blushing writer himself, though that, maybe, is a supersensitive solicitude. Well, these are risks which *The Remnant* compels me to run. It seems to me, as Emerson said of the *Leaves of Grass* (to the magnitude of which I do not, of course, compare it), 'one of the most extraordinary pieces of wit and wisdom' recently produced—eulogy which is not, perhaps, after all, extravagant,—I might almost venture to say, that Ireland has produced. Its blending of whimsical humour, quaint wit, impressive thought, and, above all, the rich poetry of its prose, give one the unmistakable thrill of an original temperament, the unique satisfaction of thought passionately conceived and perfectly uttered.

The book is one of those books, rare in these teetotal days, which intoxicate. It has 'the courage to be beautiful,' and is not ashamed of showing its feelings. It is full of natural magic and fascination. It gets into both the head and the heart. It lures us by a spell, and it leaves us in a dream. We put it down, to quote its author's own beautiful words, 'as one who goes forth into the morning woods, in whose brain yet flaunt the pomps and processions of his dreams.'

J. A. Symonds: H. F. Brown's 'Biography.'

THE fascinating biography of the late John Addington Symonds, which his friend Mr. Horatio F. Brown has pieced together with great skill from Symonds's private autobiography and correspondence, sends one off thinking in so many directions that one hardly knows where to begin writing of it. Symonds was just the man of whom we desire a biography, for the reason that he was never quite able to give himself in his books, though all his writing seemed to vibrate with a somewhat pathetic endeavour to do so. A temperament offering more sides of interest to the psychologist could hardly be imagined—so complex and yet so simple, so cultivated and yet so human, so neurotically sensitive and yet so essentially manly, so egoistical and yet so humble. A painful sense of frustration saddens this biography from the first line to the last. Symonds was passionate to be a literary creator, an original poet; he had to rest content with being a sensitive and catholic critic. The accumulated beauty and wisdom of the world never found a more rapturous worshipper or more eager student. His powers of appreciation and sympathy knew no limits. Plato and Walt Whitman, the flawless tranquillity of Greek art, the rich turbulence of Elizabethan poetry, all schools, all manners, and all matters, found answering instincts or tastes in him, who perhaps came as near as possible to the ideal critic—a being properly having no self, but, like the elemental spirits, taking the colour, and answering to the moods, of other masterful personalities. Yet this was not the success for which

Symonds yearned. His dream was to be a poet—that is, after his aim to be 'a man': for it is a most significant characteristic that this most cultivated and 'literary' of men was always preaching the comparative insignificance of literature as against 'life.' 'I often recognise in myself,' runs one of the many wise passages of his autobiography, 'and sometimes in people round me, the error of making what we call our work, which is usually our easiest form of occupation, an excuse for laziness in discharging the kindly offices of kinship, society, and friendship.'

Symonds was not only a great critic of art and literature, but, what is still rarer, a singularly accurate critic of himself. He took his own measure with pathetic precision, and accepted it with noble humility. That he failed as a poet, as a creative writer of prose even, no one knew better than himself. 'How I envy you,' he wrote in one of his habitually generous letters to a certain young poet, 'your gift of rhythm, and inevitably melodic phrase! No, envy is not the word; but if God had given me that gift, I could have said what I wanted, and what I must never say through want of magic.' Again he writes, still more explicitly: 'I have not the inevitable touch of the true poet, the unconquerable patience of the conscious artist. . . . I have written few good paragraphs, and possibly no single perfect line.' And yet, if a poet could have been *made*, instead of born, certainly Symonds had opportunities such as have fallen to the lot of few great poets. He was born and brought up in the lap of culture. His Clifton home was rich in spiritual, intellectual, and

artistic influences; all the most approved Harrovian and Oxonian apparatus for the production of men of genius was brought to bear upon him. His biography is quaintly enriched with portraits of 'J. A. Symonds, Harrow,' and 'J. A. Symonds, Oxford.' He was a 'young gentleman' with nothing to think of but the development of his soul and his æsthetic faculties, and, it is but fair to remember, the doctoring of certain physical troubles. He was evidently, in some ways, as he himself puts it, an ugly duckling. His nerves were terribly against him. He suffered from terrifying and exhausting nightmares, was perplexed with strange trance-like visitations, and worn with æsthetic sensibilities morbidly keen, when even quite young: besides, he was not beautiful in personal appearance, and thus suffered at times from painful self-consciousness. These were disadvantages, certainly; but, when one reads his delightful description of the old Clifton House garden, and takes account of the refined and inspiring influences of his home life, one involuntarily thinks of such men as Burns and Blake, and realises that, after all, influential as a man's environment admittedly is, his original self is the important fact.

If, judged by the standard of his ambitions, Symonds's literary career was somewhat of a failure, we must not forget how high that standard was, and the very notable character of his actual achievement. His capacity for hard work was enormous, his industry amazing. 'Drudgery, too, is a kind of goddess,' is one of the many wise counsels scattered up and down his biography, which is one of the fullest and most

suggestive records of the literary temperament ever written. And, again, how profoundly instructive is his remark: 'The fault of my education as a preparation for literature was that it was exclusively literary.' And yet no man ever drank more deeply of the cup of life, or lived with a keener eye of observation upon his experiences. From his boyhood he was accustomed to write minute accounts, in diaries and letters, of all that happened to him or about him, all he saw, felt, or read. He was a charming letter-writer, and his earliest letters from Harrow to his much-loved sister are marked by that picturesqueness, that keen eye for exact and beautiful detail, which was perhaps his most characteristic literary gift. There are many pages of his beautiful descriptive writing in these volumes, in which, indeed, he is always seen at his best as a writer. His style was markedly improving to the last, simplifying and working free of its over-luxuriance and its ungainly Latinisms. 'How write calmly, equably, judicially, vigorously, eloquently for years, until a mighty work stands up to say, This man has lived!' runs a rather sad passage in an early diary. 'Take notice, men, this man had nerves unstrung, blear eyes, a faltering gait, a stammering tongue, and yet he added day by day labour to labour, and achieved his end! Shall it, can it, be?' No one who reads this book, or knows the extent of Symonds's achievement, can but answer—it has been! Symonds might call the result failure. To others it must seem very distinguished and noble success.

'A MAN loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.' Not so, however, Mr. George Saintsbury, whose *Corrected Impressions* I have been reading with that peculiar piquancy of pleasure which always attaches to the criticism of contemporaries. Mr. Saintsbury rather fulfils that other proverb about first impressions being lasting. Actually, he seems to have little to correct in his first impressions of that later Victorian literature which is the theme of his book. The gods of his youth are still, for the most part, the gods of his middle age. Writing of Mr. William Morris's *Defence of Guenevere*, he says: 'For my part I loved the book at once with a love full-grown and ardent; nor do I think that that love has decreased an inch in stature or a degree in heat since.' This is the note of most of Mr. Saintsbury's faithful appreciations. He is able sometimes to keep still more difficult faith. For example, he enjoys *Pickwick* as much to-day as when he first read it, at about ten or twelve years of age; and he makes one uncomfortable by adding that he 'should not think very much of any one who materially altered his opinion of *Pickwick*, however many years he might live, and however many times he might read it afterwards.' Mr. Saintsbury himself never allows 'more than a year or two to pass without reading *Pickwick* through from beginning to end.' But, one appeals to him, what is to become of us if we simply *cannot* read *Pickwick*? Even the theologians would not insist that belief is a matter of the will. The heart has to be touched, or one has to

George Saintsbury: 'Corrected Impressions.'

be endowed with some special grace of nature. Then, I suppose, the only way for the unbeliever in *Pickwick* is to go and pray till his eyes are opened. The present writer ventures upon no personal opinion, not having read Dickens since he was a boy. There is the trouble of the literary critic's existence: how review all the new books and keep on reading the old ones, which, seeing that we have a complete change of mental constitution every seven years, it is necessary to do, unless we are to go on relying at thirty on impressions made at fifteen? At fifteen *Pickwick* seemed to me the most wonderful book in the world, or something like it. Since then I have only once encountered it, in a volume of extracts—the extract concerning Mr. Winkle's adventures at Bath; and I am bound to confess that, with every desire to avoid seeming one of those Superior Young Persons about whom Mr. Saintsbury is occasionally sarcastic, I couldn't for the life of me feel the fun of it. It left me with a profound fear of correcting *my* impressions of Dickens.

Yet it must not be inferred that Mr. Saintsbury is a blind worshipper of Dickens. His criticism of him is, on the contrary, most suggestively discriminating. He speaks out his faults plain as can be, and strips him one by one of nearly every decoration of popular fame. For Dickens the bourgeois, the sentimentalist, the social reformer, Dickens the author of *A Tale of Two Cities*, and every other Dickens save Dickens the great fantastic humourist, he has no defence to make; but then, for him, that Dickens makes divine amends for all the others. His insistence that the essential element of

Dickens's humour is fantasy seems to me particularly sound, and that to object to his characters because they are not 'real,' as everyday life is real, is to object to the inhabitants of quite another world because they are not as the inhabitants of ours. There are more worlds than one, and one great world is the world of Dickens's fantastic imaginations, which, Mr. Saintsbury holds, are as alive as, nay more alive than, any being of mere flesh and blood that ever lived.

No one could say that Mr. Saintsbury is without his prejudices. He would probably think small beer of any one so emasculated. He is no great admirer of Mr. Gladstone, and in an excellent appreciation of Browning declares that *Sordello* is not half so obscure as one of the great statesman's speeches. He is, obviously, no friend of the democracy, and his admiration of Carlyle is mainly founded, curious as it will sound to some, on *The Latterday Pamphlets*. 'You like Carlyle,' said a friend to him, 'because he has made you more of a Tory than the devil had made you already'—and Mr. Saintsbury doesn't mind admitting it. Indeed, his chief hope for the continuance of Carlyle's fame is that he may cheer the faltering hearts of future Tories, and 'continue even in evil days to inspire some with determination *malignum spernere vulgus*.'

But if Mr. Saintsbury is a good hater, he is no less warm in his appreciation. Judicious and discriminating as his criticism is, there is nothing about it of the indifferent superiority, the refusal to glow, which is the approved fashion of the moment. He says of Mr.

Swinburne, of whom he is an out-and-out admirer: 'It may possibly be a fault of Mr. Swinburne's that he lends himself rather ill to mere dispassionate admiration. I doubt myself whether any poet of a very high class can be dispassionately appreciated: but certainly he cannot.' Mr. Saintsbury is fortunate enough to have been in at the portentous birth of *Poems and Ballads*. He gives us a vivid idea of the excitement its publication produced in literary circles, and tells how, not being able to get a copy before he went up to Oxford, in October, 1866, he had to avail himself of an expedition to town to 'eat dinners' to get one. 'Three copies of the precious volume,' he tells us, 'with "Moxon" on cover and "John Camden Hotten" on title-page, accompanied me back that night, together with divers maroons for the purpose of enlivening matters on the ensuing Fifth of November'—the book itself, as he adds, no little of a maroon. Those must have been stirring times, and it is to be feared that he is right in thinking that we have no excitements to match them in ours.

Mr. Saintsbury is rich in such memories of what we might call literary first-nights, and the atmosphere of those brave days when he was twenty-one gives his book a unique fascination. But, for all his enthusiasm, he seems always to have glowed over the right thing—mere 'booms' do not seem to have turned his head even passingly in their direction. What he neatly describes as the 'well-engineered fame' of George Eliot, with Lewes, of course, for the skilful engineer, never counted him among its votaries, though he admires George Eliot judiciously, none the less. It is disillu-

sionising for us youngsters to hear of a fame on which we have been born and bred as having been 'well-engineered,' just as though it were a 'boom' of a modern wire-pulled novelist. How many haughty fames of the past, one falls to pondering, owe their existence to skilful engineering? One thinks of two or three eighteenth-century immortals. Some names have a way of sticking, out of all proportion to the literary merits of their possessors, and, alas! it is to be feared that it is painfully the reverse with some others. However, all Lewes's 'engineering' has not availed to keep alive 'a fame,' to again quote Mr. Saintsbury, 'once so great, in part so solidly founded, and yet now to a greater extent than strict justice can approve almost utterly vanished away.'

R. L. Stevenson: 'The Amateur Emigrant.'

AT the time of his death, as is well known, Mr. Stevenson was engaged on a novel, which he regarded as the most powerful he had written, entitled *Weir of Hermiston.* No doubt this will some day be published, as, so to speak, his *Edwin Drood.* Of course, if we ever have the opportunity, we shall read it with that eagerness with which one has for so long turned to every word fallen from his pen. Yet I confess that personally, I am most anxious to know if, in the manuscripts which so regularly industrious a writer must have left behind him, there are any more of those essays

or rambling travel-sketches, in which—and not in his novels, as I have often insisted—the true Stevenson is most to be found. The new volume of the Edinburgh Edition, it will be good news to all whom it concerns, contains no less than one hundred and six virgin pages of this best inimitable Stevenson. The American sketches in *Across the Plains* were originally projected as a complete travel-book under the title of *The Amateur Emigrant*, and they are now fitted in their proper place in that hitherto unpublished account of an emigrant voyage from this world to the next. Mr. Stevenson went 'second cabin,' apparently from desire to make copy of his sufferings. Practically second cabin meant steerage, with, so to speak, 'Esquire' written after it. The food was almost exactly the same as that in the steerage, the sleeping accommodation ditto, and the only real distinction was in the name of the thing. 'In the steerage,' says Mr. Stevenson, 'there are males and females; in the second cabin, ladies and gentlemen.' 'For some time after I came aboard I thought I was only a male; but,' he adds with characteristically quaint frankness, 'in the course of a voyage of discovery between decks I came on a brass plate, and learned that I was still a gentleman.' Occasionally, when stung by the impertinent eyes of the saloon passengers patronising them from the hurricane deck, Mr. Stevenson would go and look at that plate, and reassure himself that though his very companions took him for a 'second mate,' a mason, or an engineer, he was still deep down in his heart a 'gentleman.'

But, as he, with his refreshing humanity, constantly

insists throughout these sketches, he was not the only gentleman among his fellow-travellers who was thus overlooked by the patricians of the saloon. Describing, in a very living picture, one Barney, a light-hearted little Irishman, full of song and jest, and ready at the dance, but oddly sensitive, like Shelley, to any touch of the coarse or indecent in the anecdotes of his companions, 'his taste,' Mr. Stevenson says, 'was for the society of gentlemen, of whom, with the reader's permission, there was no lack in our five steerages or second cabin.' Later on, he further enlarges upon this casual remark.

'I have seen,' he says, 'a lawyer in the house of a Hebridean fisherman; and I know, but nothing will induce me to disclose, which of these two was the better gentleman. Some of our finest behaviour, though it looks well enough from the boxes, may seem even brutal to the gallery . . . To be a gentleman is to be one all the world over, and in every relation and grade of society. It is a high calling, to which a man must first be born, and then devote himself for life.'

Again:

'Some of my fellow-passengers, as I now moved among them in a relation of equality, seemed to me excellent gentlemen. They were not rough, nor hasty, nor disputatious; debated pleasantly, differed kindly; were helpful, gentle, patient, and placid. The type of manners was plain, and even heavy; there was little to please the eye, but nothing to shock; and I thought gentleness lay more nearly at the spring of behaviour than in many more ornate and delicate societies.'

One other characteristic of his companions, which Mr. Stevenson notes as general in their class, is their hatred of work and frank laziness. 'Nothing,' he says, 'is perhaps more notable in the average workman than

his surprising idleness, and the candour with which he confesses to the failing. It has to me been always something of a relief to find the poor, as a general rule, so little oppressed with work.' 'It is not,' he again adds, 'sufficiently recognised that our race detests to work.' This, the reader will not need to be told, is not the first time that Mr. Stevenson has been the Apologist of Idlers. It is in such frank, truthful criticism of life that he has done so much for that Return to Simplicity in human life for which we are all hoping and working. No writer had ever a firmer hold on the realities of human nature and human conduct. Describing another of his fellow-travellers, a certain Mackay, full of utilitarian social ideals and cheap 'schoolbook materialism,' he says: 'He could see nothing in the world but money and steam-engines. He did not know what you meant by the word happiness. He had forgotten the simple emotions of childhood, and perhaps never encountered the delights of youth. He believed in production, that useful figment of economy, as if it had been real, like laughter.' *As if it had been real, like laughter!* There, in a sentence, is Stevenson's view of life. The spiritual good of his books, apart from their literary charm, is in his robust insistence on the realities of the simple human emotions. No writer ever loved a 'man,' or, for that matter, a woman, more whole-heartedly, wherever he found them; and no writer had less to say to the sham society puppetry that usurp those noble descriptions. Children and mothers, pretty young women and brave men, he was always on the look-out for these—with, might one say

his 'wild, accommodating eye,' though the eye belongs to a strapping young Irishwoman, in whose casual kindness to a handsome, but ragged, young stowaway, Stevenson, as usual, sees a whole heart-moving history. Seeing him, that is the stowaway, as she passed the stoke-hole one day, she pitied him for the lack of a vest, and, seeing that he had no match for his pipe, ran and brought him several. 'That was the beginning and the end,' says Mr. Stevenson, 'as far as our passage is concerned, of what I will make bold to call this love affair. There are many relations which go on to marriage, and last during a lifetime, in which less human feeling is engaged than in this scene of five minutes in the stoke-hole.'

This *Amateur Emigrant*, indeed, is inferior to none of Mr. Stevenson's writings in its *verve*, its whim, its humanity, and general charm. To my thinking, it is even better than the samples of it already published in *Across the Plains*, and it is quite rich in patches of the true Stevensonian purple, such as this:

'It was a bleak, uncomfortable day; but at night, by six bells, although the wind had not yet moderated, the clouds were all wrecked and blown away behind the rim of the horizon, and the stars came out thickly overhead. I saw Venus burning as steadily and sweetly across this hurly-burly of the winds and waters as ever at home upon the summer woods. The engine pounded, the screw tossed out of the water with a roar, and shook the ship from end to end; the bows battled with loud reports against the billows; and as I stood in the lee-scuppers and looked up to where the funnel leaned out over my head, vomiting smoke, and the black and monstrous topsails blotted, at each lurch, a different crop of stars, it seemed as if all this trouble were a thing of small account, and that just above the mast reigned peace unbroken and eternal.'

The man who could write like this will only be forgotten when Hazlitt and Lamb have fallen beneath the poppy of oblivion ; and some of us dare to think, without irreverence, that there is that in his writing which comes nearer to 'the great heart of man' he loved so wel than the writing of his great forerunners ; for sometimes it seems that he deals with weightier matters in no less winning and masterly a fashion.

Robert Burns: Rhys's Selections.

THERE can be no mistake that, in spite of the efforts of the New Puritans to suppress it, a New Spirit of Pleasure is abroad amongst us, and one that blows from no mere coteries of hedonistic philosophers, but comes on the four winds. It is, as we say, in the air. Wherever we turn, high or low, we find the Duty of Being Miserable at a discount. Bourgeois morality and conventionality are openly sneered at in the columns of respectable middle-class journals, and the questions, 'Why is it wrong to be happy?' and 'Why is it right to be miserable?' are being asked all over the land—in the little back-streets of provincial towns, as by Revolting Daughters in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair. 'Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less,'—though, somehow or other, it has contrived to do so with singular success ; yet even it is seen to be compromising with the New Spirit of Pleasure by, so to say, adding playrooms of various kinds

to its churches. But for an editor to be able to take so sane a view of Burns's 'moral character,' as Mr. Ernest Rhys ventures in the introduction to a cheap popular edition to his poems, says a great deal for the change that has come over the mind—and morals!—of the public during even the last five years.

'It has been the common responsibility of [Burns's] biographers, begins Mr. Rhys, manfully taking the bull by the horns, 'to point out how differently he might have lived, how much more wisely he might have ordered his days. More wisely, perhaps, but not so well. There is a diviner economy in these things than we have come to allow. Burns, like Shelley, like Heine, was what he was because he followed his genius. If for these and others like them; lovers of beauty and delight, spoilt children of a fickle mother—the Muse, poets and prodigals, the cup in the end is bitter: they must still drain it. Without it they would not fulfil their destiny, and die that they might live. Better men they might have been, but worse poets, less moving, less passionate, less instinct with the pity and the delight of life. Without Burns' fatal love for Mary Campbell, we should not have had the song "Highland Mary," and the lines to Mary in Heaven. . . . Without those terrible orgies in low taverns, when on occasion Burns locked the door that no roysterer might escape, we should not have had "Tam o' Shanter" and "The Jolly Beggars."'

The only objection I would make to this passage is that it seems to imply that a fine poem is sufficient excuse for actions however base, which I am sure is not Mr. Rhys's meaning, and certainly is not mine. What I should say about Burns is that it was not his morality that was wrong, but the social conditions in which he found himself. In a world where it is a crime to kiss a woman, or drink an extra glass of wine, it is obviously no easy matter to be 'good,' and Burns was, there is no doubt, largely driven to

his excesses in the latter direction by that unaccountable mismanagement of the planet which, as Carlyle graphically put it, had no better occupation to give one of the greatest minds of his time than the gauging of ale at Dumfries. At the same time, of course, the world may well feel in a dilemma as to what occupation it should find for men like Burns, unless, as surely it ought to be, it is prepared to pay them for being the one and only thing they can satisfactorily be — namely, poets. Carlyle's idea of a fiery nature like Burns dividing 'his hours between poetry and virtuous industry' is surely a little grotesque. Yet strange is it that the world will pay a man for being a lawyer or a grocer, but not for being a poet!

'So much one is driven to protest,' says Mr. Rhys, towards the conclusion of his introduction, 'because of the complacent way we are got into of reducing everything to our own facile contemporary standards of life and morality.' For an editor to be able thus to revile the sacred gods of Mrs. Grundy in a 'popular' edition of perhaps the world's most popular poet, is a remarkable sign of the times; for an editor is somewhat of a servant of the public, and indulges in opinions of his own at his peril.

John Davidson: 'Earl Lavender.'

If *Earl Lavender* had been but, say, a third shorter and Mrs. Scamler entirely cut out, it would have been a striking success in a very difficult *genre*. As it is, I confess to have read it with keen delight in its mad humour and impudent fantasticality. Mr. Davidson has recently stated that he considers *Don Quixote* the greatest prose book in the world. His devotion to it, evidently, has not been without marked influence upon his own novels. *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, which Lasted One Night and One Day*, is the third novel, or rather fantasia, which he has written on the same whimsical plan. In *Perfervid* and *Baptist Lake* we have the same half-mad central figure, determined to ride his hobby against the world, attended by a timorous Sancho Panza, whom his will and enthusiasm have distracted for a while from his everyday, commonplace sanity. The bee in the bonnet of the hero of *Perfervid*, it will be remembered, was that he was the direct descendant of the Stuarts, and that he was destined to restore the Stuart line to the throne. Earl Lavender, so-called, is firmly convinced, under the influence of whisky, vanity, whim, and original mental and moral perversity, that he is born to be the prophet and exemplar of Evolution. Armed with the formula, 'The fit shall survive, and Earl Lavender is the fittest,' he and his friend, alike impecunious, make a tour of the taverns in the town, and, when asked to pay, Earl Lavender, with ready eloquence and insolent imperturbability

rises to preach to the company the great gospel of Evolution. The best scene of the kind, a scene perhaps a little too often repeated in the book (for, curiously enough, the author of *Scaramouch in Naxos* fails for once in invention), is that in the St. James's Restaurant, which is exceedingly humorous, and absolutely convincing.

Another clever scene of convincing farce is that in Epping Forest, where Earl Lavender imagines himself to have discovered the missing link, and gives a lunch in its honour at the Razor and Hen. But I confess to believing and delighting in all that this Don Quixote of Evolution undertakes. It is only Mrs. Scamler who brings in unreality. She is evidently a reflection of Mrs. Chump in Mr. Meredith's *Sandra Belloni*, and Mrs. Chump has always seemed to me tiresome and unreal.

As so often happens in imaginative literature, the most real scenes in the book are those which are ostensibly most unreal; for instance, the flagellation scenes in that underground Stevensonian world—an allegory, I suppose, of the tired taste and jaded sensibilities of our end of the century. Mr. Davidson, by the way, has a proem in verse touching on the same theme, which contains some happy, pertinent phrases:

'Though our eyes turn ever waveward,
Where our sun is well-nigh set;
Though our Century totters graveward,
We may laugh a little yet.

Oh! our age-end style perplexes
All our elders time has tamed;
On our sleeves we wear our sexes,
Our diseases, unashamed.

Have we lost the mood romantic
That was once our right by birth?
Lo! the greenest girl is frantic
With the woe of all the earth!

But we know a British rumour,
And we think it whispers well:
"We would ventilate our humour
In the very jaws of hell."

Though our thoughts turn ever Doomwards,
Though our sun is well-nigh set,
Though our Century totters tombwards,
We may laugh a little yet.'

On the whole, if one must say, parodying Earl Lavender's favourite formula, 'John Davidson shall survive, but Earl Lavender is not quite the fittest,' yet, for my part, I find the obvious faults of the book trouble me but little. Everybody talks too much, and I cordially detest Mrs. Scamler, whom you cannot listen to, and from whom it is equally impossible to seek refuge in sleep. But Earl Lavender, and his henchman, and the whole absurd, entertaining idea of the thing, are realities of the imagination, which I shall often carry with me to Fleet Street and Piccadilly.

Grant Allen: 'The Woman Who Did.'

HERE is a book that goes forth to certain death—gallantly, with its eyes open. There can be little doubt as to the nature of its reception. Every man's hand will be against it. Yet even its bitterest enemies must surely feel some thrill of admiration for its courage. It is,

once more, one philosopher against the world. Not in our day, perhaps, can it be decided which is right—Mr. Grant Allen, or the world. Perhaps our children's children will some day be canonising Mr. Grant Allen for the very book for which to-day he stands a much greater chance of being stoned, and happy lovers of the new era bless the name of the man who, almost single-handed, fought the battle of Free Love. Time alone can say; and, perhaps, there is nothing in Time's bag of mystery that one would care more to have a sight of than this momentous issue. Surely there is no question nearer to the heart of man than this of the relation of the sexes, and the very eagerness with which we are ready to discuss it is in itself proof that the present conventional relations are far from perfect. We have not had to wait for *The Woman Who Did* to know Mr. Grant Allen's views on the subject. Mr. Allen, in a prefatory inscription, declares it to have been written 'for the first time in my life wholly and solely to satisfy my own taste and my own conscience.' But, if this be the first novel that Mr. Allen has thus written, he has not feared to publish the theory, of which *The Woman Who Did* is merely a dramatic illustration, in the form of magazine and newspaper articles—articles which brought a conviction there is some danger of his story dispelling. There is nothing in that which is not to be found in his famous article on 'The New Hedonism,' and in his *Post-Prandial Philosophy*. The history of Herminia Barton and Alan Merrick is merely an attempt to put the theory of 'The New Hedonism' on the stage of human life, with, it is to be feared, not entire

advantage to the theory—though that, I hasten to add, is not necessarily the fault of the theory. Perhaps, indeed, it is the fault of the novelist. Actually, Mr Allen's novel proves nothing either for or against his theory. The test is not fair, for the *dramatis personæ* are rather a philosopher's puppets than human beings. Besides, they don't observe the rules of the game, don't submit themselves to the really significant tests. To have an illegitimate baby abroad is easily done, and any unmarried mother can pass as 'respectable' by describing herself as a widow. It is in such apparently trivial matters that the test really lies, and, in giving way to her husband in these, Herminia really stultified her experiment. Moreover, in one important provision for the matrimonial New Jerusalem, Mr. Allen curiously ignores one of the first instincts of human love-making. Herminia and Alan would do nothing so common as live in the same house together. Each should have a separate establishment, and they should pay visits to each other—or rather, the woman should 'receive the visits of the men for whom she cared: the fathers of her children.' (The male is still, evidently, to pay court to the female in the old fashion. We hear nothing of Herminia paying visits to Alan's lodgings.) But, surely, when two people love each other, they *want*, above all things, to live together in the same house, and all day long.

However, these lapses from human nature in creatures that are rather clockwork than humanity are of little importance. The theory really remains where it was. And if Mr. Allen's critics, pointing to the disastrous

dénoûment of Herminia Barton's mission, are inclined to jubilate and say, 'This is what comes of your New Hedonism,' etc., the answer, easy and obvious, is that the failure of Mr. Allen as a novelist, on this occasion, is nothing against his philosophy.

The Woman Who Did, indeed, can only be described as a novel in the sense that *Rasselas*, or *Paul and Virginia*, or *The Coming Race* can be so described. It is really a 'morality.' Its purpose is everything, its people nothing. But, label it as one will, it remains a clever, stimulating book. Mr. Grant Allen can do many things. One thing, however, is impossible to him—to be dull. From that unpardonable sin he is absolutely safe. His gift of telling, paradoxical phrase is constantly in evidence in this, one of the best written of his books; and his treatment of his difficult situations sometimes shows to advantage his gift of biting irony, though his sociological enthusiasm seems to have occasionally obscured his sense of humour: as, for example, where he makes Herminia say that 'she would give her children, should any come, the unique and glorious birthright of being the only human beings ever born into this world as the deliberate result of a free union, contracted on philosophical and ethical principles'! If we could only once hear Herminia Barton laugh a warm-hearted human laugh, we could believe in her. But, alas! she is a sort of sacred fashion-plate from start to finish: a Puritan of Puritans, prig of prigs, pioneer of pioneers; and we have strong suspicions that she objected to 'ladies' smoking. Compare her with Mr. Meredith's Clotilde in *The Tragic Comedians*—for Herminia is hardly so

unique a 'martyr' as her creator claims her to be—and, by the side of that full-blooded heroine, she is a phantom at cock-crow. I should like to set Herminia down in front of an old Rhine wine such as Alvan and Clotilde would drink together, and watch the result. I am afraid it would be a lofty discourse on the new hygiene, and end in the *garçon* taking the pledge. By the side even of Lord Ormont's—or rather, 'Matey's'—Aminta, she is a lay figure; but these comparisons are not meant unkindly, in that they serve to remind us that Mr. Allen is far from alone in his unpopular opinions on marriage. The greatest living English novelist, if his last novel means anything, is with him heart and soul. Nor is it an unfair deduction from certain of Mr. Thomas Hardy's novels that the second greatest English novelist of the day is with Mr. Allen too. My own feeling is that he can afford to wait, and that some day he will have the best of the laugh. Meanwhile, none but the most foolish or malignant reader of *The Woman Who Did* can fail to recognise the noble—if possibly mistaken—purpose which animates its pages.

But Alan Merrick and Herminia Barton live together without being married! Horrible! Yet, reader, when you think of it, men and women have done the same before in novels—and out of them. The terrible thing about Mr. Allen's lovers is that they did so on a theory—a theory that it was the only right thing to do. For that I fear the reader will hardly forgive them. If they had done it—as has usually been done—on the theory that it was the only *wrong* thing to do, the reader would

no doubt think lightly of it. Which is surely a very curious and amusing freak of human opinion.

Mr. Allen has a Shelley-like conviction of the evils of marriage; he is profoundly impressed with the necessity of improving the relations between men and women, and likewise, with a Shelley-like faith and fearlessness, he preaches the doctrine which seems to him likely to tend to the maximum of domestic happiness. His remedy will, no doubt, seem to many worse than the disease; yet no one but a fool can fail to admit the disease. And in one point, at least, Mr. Allen shows up brightly against his opponents—in his loathing of prostitution, which they seem somewhat cheerfully, and at least with admirable resignation, to accept as a necessary evil. Prostitution, Mr. Allen would seem to say, comes of the attempt to force an Act of Sexual Uniformity on human nature. Some people are born monogamic. With them, perhaps the highest and happiest types, Mr. Allen would not for a moment interfere. But others are born with instincts which we might describe as centrifugal. So long as the child, that crucial factor in the calculation, is provided for—and, as Mr. Allen says, it presents no such insurmountable difficulty—the ethic of the situation is a matter for the souls of the persons to decide. Herminia Barton and Alan Merrick decided in their way. Tragedy followed. But does tragedy never follow from marriages celebrated with all due ecclesiastical etiquette and decorum? A selfish little minx like Dolores would make tragedy anywhere. If her mother had only had a little more of the coarse clay of

human nature in her, instead of being made throughout of such immaculately fine porcelain, more of rough mother earth in her composition, and, above all, some laughter, that tragedy need never have happened. But I repeat again that the unreal acts of unreal people are no arguments against a real enthusiasm for humanity such as blazes through every page of this, in many ways, remarkable and significant little book. And, above all, in writing it Mr. Allen has at last, he tells us, satisfied his own conscience. What a success is that alone! For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole literary world and lose his own soul?

Ménie Muriel Dowie: 'Gallia.'

WHATEVER else one may think or say about Miss Ménie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia*, it has certainly one quality which marks it off from all but one or two recent novels by women—the, I suppose, old-fashioned virtue of being really *written*. Without its being in any way obtruded, we feel from the first page to the last that we are in the hands of one who uses language in the careful, conscientious manner of the artist. It is but seldom that one comes across a book which gives one the same feeling of care, without any feeling of strain, or affectation. Miss Dowie has been able to strike the happy mean between, say, the somewhat mincing fastidiousness of Mr. Henry James and the extremely unfastidious tea-gown English of certain

lady writers whom it would be imprudent in me to name—as no young man can afford to make enemies of women. It will not, of course, surprise Miss Dowie to be told that she knows how to write. She proved that she could do that in *A Girl in the Karpathians*, a book which gave promise of a delightful rambling essayist such as we could well do with at the moment. There were passages of whimsical humour and description of real charm that I remember to this day—which is a good deal to say for a book that rather aimed at being the sensation of a season than a lasting piece of literature.

There are similar passages in Miss Dowie's novel. Moreover, it abounds in brilliant and subtle observations of men and women, and contains several striking scenes. The scene in which Gallia confesses her love to 'Dark Essex' is a masterly piece of narrative. Yet, on the whole, the book strikes me as a *tour de force* devilishly clever, but differing little save in degree, little in kind, from many other clever novels that people write nowadays. It is not temperamental, it is not Ménie Muriel Dowie, or at any rate the Ménie Muriel Dowie one caught glimpses of in *A Girl in the Karpathians*. It is the book of a somewhat *blasé* social critic, not ostentatiously *blasé*, but quietly and determinedly so; somewhat cynical, and too decidedly superior. Moreover, its plot is rather hackneyed and mechanical, and, well-drawn as they are, its *dramatis personæ* are familiar types of modern fiction, with the exception of Gallia, who is in many ways an engaging heroine. She is a sort of younger sister

of Diana of the Crossways, and, like Mr. Meredith's heroine, she promises to be a great deal more courageous than she proves, and ends, too, by rather tamely marrying the Redworth of the story, the insufferable prig Mark Gurdon. *Gallia*, the novel, is similarly tantalising. It has so many brilliant qualities that it is difficult to understand why it should leave one with so comparatively negative an impression. However, one positive impression remains, that Miss Dowie can write, and one lays down her novel with a hope that she will some day write a volume of bright, social criticism, such as she is exceptionally qualified to give us.

Lionel Johnson: 'Poems.'

To—shall we say?—the professional lovers of Thomas Hardy, to those who merely collect his first editions as some collect book-plates, Mr. Lionel Johnson's *Art of Thomas Hardy* was, I believe, a disappointment. As criticism, I am bound to admit, it fell short—it was too busied with the methods of criticism in general, curiously forgetting their particular application to Mr. Hardy. Yet for those who are able to take a book for what it is, independent of what it professes to, or ought to, be, Mr. Lionel Johnson's book on Mr. Hardy was far from being a disappointment. Its learning alone, so irritating, it would seem—to the learned?—I confess, no little impressed and delighted me. It was like spending an afternoon in the Bodleian. But it was not

merely its old-world love of learning that made the book memorable; it was the poetry one felt behind the prose, poetry that enriched the book with many passages of solemn eloquence and vivid description. However, one had not to wait for Mr. Johnson's prose to know that he was a poet. His contributions to the *Book of the Rhymers' Club* attracted attention among those who care to keep a sympathetic eye upon 'the homely slighted shepherd's trade.' At a time when it was the fashion for the young poet to be lawlessly 'modern' both in theme and style, it was refreshing to find a very young poet deliberately singing the old ideals, and following the old great traditions—a poet who believed not only in God and King Charles, but in Homer and Shakespeare, Dante and Milton, a literary Catholic believing devoutly in the apostolic succession of all really great writers, loving that one unchangeable literary ideal, which, as Sainte-Beuve has said, is 'new and ancient, easily contemporaneous with every age.'

The spontaneous impulse one felt was a little low in vitality. Had there never been poets before him, it is very unlikely that Mr. Johnson would have been a poet at all. But then he is not the first poet begotten of poets, and such poets, if seldom or never great, our sophisticated tastes are often apt to consider more delightful than the great. The subtle echo of the voices of the great has a charm which those voices themselves sometimes fail to exercise. Such, Mr. Churton Collins has somewhat narrowly decided, is largely the charm of Tennyson, and Mr. Lionel Johnson's poetry

is thus 'rich with sweets from every muse's hive.' His volume is like an old garden, every flower awakening charming reminiscences of unforgotten, half-forgotten, and perhaps quite forgotten, poets, the whole invested with an antique dignity, and steeped in the sentiment of antiquity. The passion for the past has seldom, if ever, in our day found so devout an expression. Every poem seems to whisper to us 'the old was best'—'the old was best'—and we put down the volume firmly determined to join the Legitimist League to-morrow. And surely that cause which was so fruitful an inspirer of unselfish ideals, and of so much noble poetry in its day and since, has seldom found expression so moving, yet so dignified, as in Mr. Johnson's lines to the statue of King Charles I. at Charing Cross :

'Comely and calm, he rides
Hard by his own Whitehall :
Only the night wind glides :
No crowds, nor rebels, brawl.

Gone, too, his Court : and yet,
The stars his courtiers are :
Stars in their stations set ;
And every wandering star.

Alone he rides, alone,
The fair and fatal king :
Dark night is all his own,
That strange and solemn thing.

Which are more full of fate :
The stars ; or those sad eyes?
Which are more still and great :
Those brows ; or the dark skies?'

Such a poem as this, apart from its value as poetry, is a touching witness to the constancy of the human heart.

Among Mr. Lionel Johnson's new poems the one which fascinates me most is that upon an old drawing, from which I quote these two haunting verses:

'Not in the crystal air of a Greek glen,
Not in the houses of imperial Rome,
Lived he, who wore this beauty among men:
No classic city was his ancient home.
What happy country claims his fair youth then,
Her pride? and what his fortunate lineage?
Here is no common man of every day,
This man, whose full and gleaming eyes assuage
Never their longing, be that what it may:
Of dreamland only he is citizen,
Beyond the flying of the last sea's foam.

Set him beneath the Athenian olive trees,
To speak with Marathonians: or to task
The wise serenity of Socrates;
Asking what other men dare never ask.
Love of his country and his gods? Not these
The master thoughts, that comfort his strange heart,
When life grows difficult, and the lights dim:
In him is no simplicity, but art
Is all in all, for life and death, to him:
And whoso looks upon that fair face, sees
No nature there: only a magic mask.'

Among the many lost causes which Mr. Johnson loves to celebrate is the old Irish literature, and he has a touching apostrophe to the 'Celtic Speech,' of which I quote the fine opening verse—the poem being appropriately dedicated to Dr. Douglas Hyde:

'Never forgetful silence fall on thee,
Nor younger voices overtake thee,
Nor echoes from thine ancient hills forsake thee;
Old music heard by Mona of the sea:
And where with moving melodies there break thee
Pastoral Conway, venerable Dee.'

IN the opening lines of his 'Hymn to the Sea' Mr. Watson, no doubt with a side glance at certain of his critics, somewhat insistingly describes himself as a 'minstrel'—

William Watson: 'Hymn to the Sea.'

'Who finds and not fashions his numbers,
Who, from the commune of air, cages the volatile song.'

Now, I hardly think that Mr. Watson's warmest admirer can do other than be a little amused at his evident anxiety—an anxiety curiously characteristic of the artist—to be praised for the very thing he is not. If you praise a man for his workmanship, he immediately thinks that you discredit his 'inspiration'; and if you lay stress upon his spontaneity, he deems that you imply imperfection in his 'art.' Strange as it may seem, we all want to be praised for the thing we can't, or don't, do. Mr. Watson is evidently dissatisfied with being compared to Milton, and, for a moment, craves the fame of a Burns, the poet who, of course, of all poets, found, and not fashioned, his numbers. That phrase, 'finds and not fashions,' is one that tempts one into primrose paths of literary dalliance. It opens up bewitching vistas of critical generalisation, which it behoves one to resist. However, I may be allowed the comment that both he who finds and he who fashions are alike instinctive, both at once sons of nature as of art—that the finder fashions and the fashioner finds; and that such poetry as the lyrics of Burns only *seems* more instinctive because of its employment of simpler literary forms—forms nearer to the everyday expression of

human emotion. The convoluted hexameters and pentameters in which Mr. Watson has well chosen to hymn the sea are no doubt as natural as many another complex form in what we call 'nature'; but the fact of their rarer occurrence—as of the occurrence of certain intricately wrought shells—brings the matter of their artistic 'fashioning' into an inevitable prominence. It is just as hard—perhaps harder—to write one of Burns's simple four-line stanzas, or, say, one of Mr. Davidson's ballad verses; but it doesn't seem so, for the reason that, externally, there seems less necessity for effort. Still, if words are to be of any service, we must go on, arbitrarily no doubt, talking of some poetry as found and some as fashioned; and, not forgetting that nature is in both of them alike, it is surely not unfair to describe Mr. Watson's poetry as belonging rather to the poetry which is fashioned, which seems wrought rather than sung. Surely it is rather a straining of imagery to describe the writing of a long, elaborated poem in hexameters as caging the volatile song! But I have fallen into the temptation which I promised to avoid. I have made Mr. Watson's poem the excuse for talking of everything else. I am not sure that, in a measure, Mr. Watson has not done the same by the sea. I venture to suggest that, robbed of the help of the title, even intelligent readers of poetry might flounder some time among the serpentine coils of his swaying verse, without even an inkling as to the subject thus ceremoniously celebrated. One might, without fear of misunderstanding or offence, address the first sixteen lines to any lady of one's acquaintance—with the exception

of the word 'roar,' which would no doubt puzzle the lady, but is in no way, either before or after, elucidated by a plain reference to the sea. It is only with the fine seventeenth line—'Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest and never art broken'—that a reader ignorant of the title would begin to realise where he was. Afterwards one has a key to the lavish variety of fancy, the most characteristic beauty of the poem, which culminates in the lovely passage, in the third section, in which Mr. Watson thus freshly allegorises the old passion of the sea for the moon :

'When, as yonder, thy mistress, at height of her mutable glories,
Wise from the magical East, comes like a sorceress pale.
Ah, she comes, she arises,—impassive, emotionless, bloodless,
Wasted and ashen of cheek, zoning her ruins with pearl.
Once she was warm, she was joyous, desire in her pulses abounding:
Surely thou lovedst her well, then, in her conquering youth!
Surely not all unimpassioned, at sound of thy rough serenading,
She, from the balconied night, unto her melodist leaned,—
Leaned unto thee, her bondman, who keepest to-day her commandments,
All for the sake of old love, dead at thy heart though it lie.'

Lovely lines and striking phrases are, indeed, scattered broadcast through the poem, such as :

'Youth, irrepressibly fair, wakes like a wondering rose';

and Mr. Watson has found or fashioned nothing finer than the impressive close to the second and last sections. The mystery that surrounds the life of man, for ever and ever foiling his persistent search, has seldom been embodied in sterner imagery than that of '. . . the

unscalable walls, built with a word at the prime,' where

> 'immobile as statues, with pitiless faces of iron,
> Armed at each obstinate gate stand the impassable guards.'

With such lines and passages, it ceases to be a matter of disappointment that there is little in Mr. Watson's poem of the savour of the brine, such as one finds in Mr. Kipling's sea-ballads, little of that mad sea-passion of the swimmer which in poetry is Mr. Swinburne's literary secret. If you want to be taken by magic within sight and sound and scent of the waves, Mr. Watson's 'Hymn' won't do it. You must read again certain passages in *Tristram of Lyonesse* or *A Midsummer Holiday*—or, if I dare mention it in Mr. Swinburne's presence, a certain wonderful threnody of Walt Whitman's.

But such a criticism of Mr. Watson's poem amounts to little more than a criticism of his title. He calls his poem a 'Hymn to the Sea,' and for the most part fills it with fancies and philosophisings on the destiny of man! We might as well blame Wordsworth for addressing a poem 'To the Daisy,' and writing about everything else—though this is the usual method of poets when celebrating their mistresses. Similarly Mr. Watson has felt towards the sea as Wordsworth towards his daisy:

> 'Methinks that there abides in thee
> Some concord with humanity,'

and therefore his poem is more human than—maritime! Of course, the method of a reflective poem such as the 'Hymn to the Sea' is just the method of the essay in

prose. The theme is merely a text for endless variations of thought and fancy; and so long as the result is beauty, only dull and ungrateful fellows will dare to criticise its writer's divagations from his starting-point. The first question of every poem is not—does it live up to its title? or how does it 'handle its subject'? (to quote a phrase from Nonconformist criticism of sermons), but is it a poem? Does it add to the world's treasure of beautiful things? If it fulfil these latter conditions, what does it matter how it is labelled, or that it happens to be another kind of beauty than the reader was impertinent enough to expect? Indeed, the modern reader is nothing if not 'expecting.' The last thought in his mind seems to be gratitude to the bringer of the good tidings of beauty. And surely there are more ways of treating a theme than one. Many things that in reality are blustering and thunderous become in art tranquillised and even tamed—conventionalised, we call it, or symbolised—into noble and beautiful patterns. Because we have Henry Moore, shall we not delight in the blue wavy lines that represent the 'surge and thunder' of Oceanus on Japanese pottery? Mr. Watson was not attempting to express the delight of the swimmer off the coast of Cromer and Overstrand, or to catch the rough ballad poetry of the sailor; his attempt was to find beautiful words and measures for certain noble reflections and striking fancies with which the sea had inspired him, and of which it seemed spontaneously symbolic. The sea as a symbol of man was, broadly, his motive; and if there is less of the sea than of man in his poem, what does it matter? Great is the sea, but

greater is the soul of man; and a poem filled with high utterance upon his destiny and his dreams belongs to a more important *genre* of poetry than the most masterly seascape.

John Davidson: 'St. George's Day.'

TURNING from Mr. Watson's 'Hymn' to Mr. Davidson's new *Fleet Street Eclogue*, the divergence between these two poets is sharply borne in upon us. It is the difference between a stately old-world garden, clipped and trim, yet distinguished and even noble in its impression, and the careless charm of a winding woodland lane, thoughtlessly crowded with sweets and graces and unconscious natural strengths and dignities. It is the difference between Hampton Court and the Forest of Arden. Though both poems, to recall what I have said above, are at once works of nature as well as of art, immediate literary art has obviously had less to do with Mr. Davidson's poem than with Mr. Watson's—the art has the look of being more instinctive, less conscious. To say this is to imply no comparison. Between poetry so different, there can, properly, be no comparison. The eclectic lover of letters, indeed, will have no preference. How choose between two different kinds of perfection? Why not contentedly enjoy both?—surely no difficult matter. And, apart from the strenuous motive of Mr. Davidson's Eclogue of *St. George's Day*, which vibrates sternly through all his charming babble

of green fields and lover's stiles,—the motive of the greatness of England and its present social agony,—there are lovely and startling lines scattered lavishly all about, carelessly as we say is nature's fashion in the lanes—lines with the inevitableness of flowers, those simple phrases that seem to have been said from and for eternity. How thrillingly direct is this fine image of Shakespeare!—

> 'I hear the laughing, singing voice
> Of Shakespeare warming England through.'

It is more like a fact than a metaphor. Again, how much is said in these four lines!—

> 'The Present is a dungeon dark
> Of social problems. Break the gaol!
> Get out into the splendid Past
> Or bid the splendid Future hail.'

'The splendid Past,' or 'the splendid Future'—there is the only choice for the artist, now and always. Both Mr. Watson and Mr. Davidson have chosen the splendid Past, and bravely and seductively they sing us back into its old dreams and fashions.

Some men are interesting because they have done their thinking, some because they have not. Mr. Davidson is one of the latter. His temperament is one that will always, I think, respond sensitively to the last change in the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere; and his art may suffer for this characteristic to the end. For some it will be none the less fascinating for that. There is something estranging for humanity in perfection; and, judged by his latest poem, Mr. Davidson is

not yet artistically perfect. It has the same qualities, in much the same proportion, as the rest of his work. It is as splendidly careless in its force and beauty as ever. There are a few terribly flat lines such as :

> 'I hear the gibbering of the mad ;
> Sinistêr workhouse folk I note ;
> I mark the sable ironclad. . . .'

Or these :

> 'And Parnell, who so greatly fought
> To make a mob a people, then
> With Fate inevitably wrought
> That Irish should be English men.'

I know a genial critic on a certain literary weekly who will be able to see nothing in this fine poem but these few screeching lines ; so cruelly has nature constituted him, that the small, unimportant blemishes of a book seem to hold his critical eyes with a species of fascination. Happily for me, I am builded otherwise ; and having gently remonstrated with Mr. Davidson on these lapses into prose, how easy it seems to forget them in the power and loveliness of the rest of the poem ! The theme is England's greatness and England's misery, sung side by side by two of Mr. Davidson's Fleet Street shepherds, with the praise of English spring making a lovely undertone, like the half-heard ripple of an English stream. The now familiar figures troop into the Fleet Street tavern—Basil, Menzies, Percy, Brian, Herbert, Sandy. Menzies has a bad fit of the spleen. Herbert at once prescribes his cure of the country-side :

> 'An old stile stands between
> Two beeches silvery smooth,
> All carved and kissed by lovers fond.'

Menzies continues to fume, and thus they commence a sort of duet of city pessimism and country peace, the others occasionally dropping in a word. It is all very well to talk of green hedgerows and April weather, growls Menzies, but these cannot shut out from him the social agonies of the time. 'I cannot see the stars and flowers,' he sings in a fine outburst—

'Nor hear the lark's soprano ring,
Because a ruddy darkness lowers
For ever, and the tempests sing.
I see the strong coerce the weak,
And labour overwrought rebel;
I hear the useless treadmill creak,
The prisoner, cursing in his cell;
I see the loafer-burnished wall;
I hear the rotting match-girl whine;
I see the unslept switchman fall;
I hear the explosion in the mine;
I see along the heedless street
The sandwichmen trudge through the mire;
. . . . . .
And always divers undertones
Within the roaring tempest throb—
The chink of gold, the labourer's groans,
The infant's wail, the woman's sob.
Hoarsely they beg of Fate to give
A little lightening of their woe,
A little time to love, to live,
A little time to think and know.
I see where in the east may rise
Some unexpected dreadful dawn—
The gleam of steeled and scowling eyes,
A flash of women's faces wan!'

With quiet irony Basil rejoins to this long jeremiad: 'This is St. George's Day!' 'St. George!' says Sandy:

'That surely is a phantom cry
Hollow and vain for many years.'

Then Basil and Menzies take up the duet. Still prophesies Menzies:

> 'I hear the idle workmen sigh;
> I hear the drip of women's tears.'

To which Basil splendidly (if, you may say, somewhat unpractically) retorts:

> 'I hear the laughing, singing voice
> Of Shakespeare warming England through;
> His birthday, this.'

Is a great past of poetry, one wonders, any comfort to a country in the throes of a painful labour movement? Thenceforward Basil leads the song, as an uncompromising Jingo. 'I want,' he says,

> 'to sing
> Of England and of Englishmen
> Who made our country what it is.'

And thence the strain becomes fast and furious in praise of everything English, Basil not allowing Celt and Scot to hold aloof, claiming them all as Englishmen; and not only celebrating England's past, but prophesying for her a still more splendid future:

> 'England is in her spring;
> She only begins to be.
> Oh! for an organ voice to sing
> The summer I can see!
> But the Past is there; and a mole may know,
> And a bat may understand,
> That we are the people wherever we go—
> Kings by sea and land!'

After such a stirring lyric one could hardly think Basil capable of perpetrating such a barbarous line as :

'For we are the world's forlorn hope,'

a line which Menzies, in spite of our feelings, keeps repeating with savage irony, as though he were turning on a steam-whistle, every few lines. But it is not for me to insist on a casual flaw such as this. I am simple-minded enough to be all too thankful for the rest.

H. D. Lowry: 'Women's Tragedies.'

THOSE who have come across Mr. H. D. Lowry's striking sketches of Cornish life in the magazines will welcome with more than usual welcome a collection of them under the title of *Women's Tragedies*. They gain by being printed together. Story by story a world is built up, with people, manners, fashions, sentiments and ways of thought, among which we soon become familiar; and though each story, with an exception or two, deals with different *dramatis personæ*, we bring to it the general accumulated effect of atmosphere and conditions to which it in its turn contributes.

Mr. Lowry is, no doubt, the latest of Mr. Hardy's several promising disciples. Certainly he is not the least. His materials are much the same as Mr. Hardy's, as is the manner and temper in which he employs them. The lives of simple folk living in small

country towns and villages—'simple' we say glibly, yet illustrating the same tragic truths and eternal meanings of existence as any lives lived on a broader stage.

We associate the great passions with the great figures of art and history. They go in purple in the great poets. It is still a surprise, even with a flourishing school of topographical novelists in our midst, to find these 'good country folks' beings of 'like passions with ourselves'! They, too, are subject to the siren voices of the world, them also love and beauty and death—and drink—transfigure and shatter. There is a Venusberg, and the heavenly mount of Beatrice in every village. And this surprise, this conflict between aspiration and condition, makes the piquancy of that country tragedy which Mr. Hardy was perhaps the first to put into books. Apollo is never so fascinating as when in the lowly garb of a herdsman—the artistic temperament feeding the pigs or the public. It is the music drawn from the 'oaten' pipe that enthrals us most. In Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* there is a Yorkshire manufacturer, rough and 'homespun,' and yet steeped to the finger-tips in the best poetry, the best music, the best pictures. The piquancy of the contrast between the 'broad Yorkshire' of his accent and his artistic interests is perennially charming. A Yorkshireman who loves Keats, a plough-boy who writes immortal love-lyrics, the peasant who worships beauty with a passion which would do credit to presidents of academies—these are the interesting, the really 'surprising' people.

We meet many such in Mr. Lowry's sketches. All

the passions and perversities that have gone to make history and art are illustrated by one or other of these, so to say, pocket tragedies. In Mr. George Moore's *Vain Fortune* there is a clever sketch of a humble lover of beauty whose only opportunity of expressing his artistic instincts is on the London pavements; in Mr. Lowry's story, 'Beauty's Lover,' we have a similar mute, inglorious Titian, whose love of beauty flowers passionately in his little front garden. One day Rosetta, 'herself a fairer flower,' passed his cottage, and for the first time begged a bloom. This unwonted sympathy moved Penhallow so that he for the first time fully recognised her beauty—for, like all lovers of beauty, he was unpopular with the public. The end of this beginning was that he married Rosetta—for her beauty. Rosetta knew for what he had married her, and she would hardly have been beautiful if she had not been content. Her face, as she said, was all the world to her husband. 'There have been many who would have done much for me because of the face God gave me. But to him 'tis all the world. He would give his life for it—ay, and his very soul. And I can't but love the man.' But the tragedy of beauty and beauty-loving works itself out in Cornwall as elsewhere. The love born of beauty, logically, dies with beauty. Strangely enough, beauty begets no gratitude. One might have thought that, when Rosetta fell ill and her face grew pinched and strange and even grotesque, her lover would still have loved it for what it once had been, for the beauty with which it had hallowed his eyes. But no! this is not the way of 'Beauty's Lover.' Nothing hardens the heart like

the love of physical beauty for its own sake. As the poor beauty was burnt up beneath the fiery touch of fever, Penhallow's love was burnt up too. 'It is not Rosetta,' he said; 'night and day I watched, and she lay there beautiful in sickness as she was before. Look at this thing that lies where she lay. It is not Rosetta; I am afraid of it.'

Now Rosetta, with one of those surprises of delirium that seem like clairvoyance, heard this, and anger gave her heart the stimulant it needed, so that she took a sudden turn and grew better from that day. She had realised with tragic force that to be loved for one's face is not enough—that such love has no human touch in it, no real heart-kindness. So when she was well enough she quietly returned to her childhood's home, bolting the door upon her husband, whose love had come back with her beauty—and she lived as a widow for the rest of her days.

These country lives seem to have the more dramatic intensity and contrast from the very smallness of the stage. Indeed, from one point of view, if it be not actually its essence, limitation is one of the essential conditions of tragedy. The tragic temperament is that which concentrates its life on one object, and refuses alternatives of happiness. The more interests in a life, the broader the horizons, the less opportunity for tragedy. The wider the area of feeling, the less, probably, the depth. It is the man whom God has doomed to the hallucination that there is only one woman in the world who runs the risk of tragedy; with the man who, on the contrary, realises that women are legion—the tragedy

probably falls to others. It is with these 'others' that Mr. Lowry's stories mainly deal. Therefore, he has described them as *Women's Tragedies*. In this title, consciously or not, Mr. Lowry makes a pathetic, and probably accurate, generalisation of the drama of so-called 'humble' human life. On any plane of society a woman's opportunities for tragedy are probably greater than a man's. She was that tragic thing a woman, we say. ''Tis a poor world for women,' says one of Mr. Lowry's country characters. Yet on the higher planes jointures and marriage settlements protect women from the fury of the elements, the Pan-passions of her goat-foot god-man. On the lower planes she is at their mercy; and though, alas! there is no denying an essential element of tragedy in human life, irrespective of superficial conditions, there is no doubt that more money and a greater sense of humour would be competent to deal with the majority of 'tragic' crises. Tragedy, as a rule, is little more than superlative inconvenience. Its chief element on the plane of society which Mr. Lowry describes is drink, though actually that curious passion is but the theme of one, though one of the most powerful, of Mr. Lowry's sketches. Where there is money there are dipsomaniac institutions. The rich can afford to isolate their lepers, the poor have to live with them. That fact simplifies three-fourths of the 'tragedies' of life. The majority of 'tragedies' belong to people without bank accounts. Drink, and fancying we care for some one or something more than we really do—such are the causes of most of our tragedies.

Selfishness is an inclusive description of them all. The only inevitable essential of tragedy is, of course, death; but beauty and love and jealousy, religion and drink, make even worse havoc of the fair garden of human life. But I 'm afraid I grow as sententious as some of Mr. Lowry's country-folk, though I cannot flatter myself that I am half so wise. How wise country-folk seem—in books, at all events! One is tempted to forswear the town and go live amongst them in search of wisdom. There seems no newest philosophy you cannot find in some antique rustic shape. For example, 'A woman has failed if she is not beautiful,' says the heroine of 'Beauty's Lover,' just as though she were playing a part in one of Mr. Oscar Wilde's plays.

And here is a fine expression of the no less than demoniacal power of beauty upon love: ''Tis a lot,' says an old widow to a girl who loves her drunken son, 'laid upon every maiden to be like God to some man or other: to know she can take his will an' turn it as she do wish, for good or ill. Sometimes he lies upon the dunghill, an' all the world couldn' raise him. But a word from her 'll make a man of him, an' may be one of the best: at least, 'tis the one thing that will make him try to rise again.' Here are two or three more examples of the wit or wisdom of the country-side: 'There edn' man nor woman you can meet that wouldn' be fit to put in a book if all the truth was known of them.' ''Tis wonderful, the wisdom of a feelin' heart, and passes understanding'; and, better still, 'I have a pain—of the heart, I think: a pain smaller than the

hurt of a cut finger, and yet it takes my life.' 'A pain smaller than the hurt of a cut finger, and yet it takes my life'—what a fine description of a broken heart! And we meet many with such small deadly pains in Mr. Lowry's book—women who wither beneath the curse of barrenness, women to whom a man-child brings something far from blessing, women whose tragedy it is to be beautiful, and women whose tragedy it is to be plain. 'You can't live to my age,' says the supposed narrator of the fine story of 'The Sisters,' 'without coming to believe that there's a Book of Fate, in which our lives are all written out beforehand'; and certainly as one reads such stories as Mr. Lowry's, in which the comparatively small stage and simple nature of the drama allow one to see more clearly the causes and conditions, one is more and more impressed with the terrible inevitability of human actions. Mr. Lowry follows his master in conveying into his stories that sense of overshadowing fate and pursuing doom which hangs like a thunder-cloud over all Mr. Hardy's country-side; though in that, surely, he has not so much followed the master Mr. Hardy, as the master Life. Perhaps nothing is more characteristic of country-folk—and all crushed hard-workers everywhere—than their fatalism. And we write about them—Mr. Lowry included—as though, all the time, an inevitable destiny of persuasive instincts and insurmountable conditions were not also shaping our own lives according to its will!

William Morris: 'The Wood beyond the World.'

WE are often told that since Mr. William Morris ceased being 'the idle singer of an empty day' and became the strenuous propagandist of Socialism, he has been lost to literature. Yet all the time he has been industriously producing volumes of romance which one might describe as a prose *Earthly Paradise*, and even his Socialism has inspired two of the most beautiful dreams of Utopia in English, namely, *The Dream of John Ball*, and *News from Nowhere*, rather than lose which, I hope it is not heresy to confess, I would not mind losing a slice of the *Earthly Paradise* itself. No doubt the archaic English in which these books are written has repelled many readers, and the archaic type in which Mr. Morris has chosen to print some of them has been a stumbling-block for others. For this reason of type alone it is a real physical trial to read right through *The House of the Wolfings*. The English of that none the less beautiful book is also somewhat wilfully archaic. 'Wardour-Street English' the critic contemptuously calls it, and in any other writer's hands but Mr. Morris's it might deserve the reproach. However, being a poet and an artist, the prose, whatever its surface archaism, is far from being a mere sham antique. It is no more so than the manner of Sir Edward Burne-Jones's painting. It is an organically developed method of literary expression which Mr. Morris conceives, and for the most part conceives rightly, as being best suited for the far-away dream-stuff he desires to embody, the stories, half saga, half fairy tale, he has to tell. In thus arbitrarily invent-

ing a literary style to express his old-world imaginings, he is but exercising to the full the immemorial right of the artist to invent his own individual method and medium. It is curious to note that Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, having matter precisely similar to express, employed the same literary method, and deliberately archaised his English. Stevenson similarly wrought out for himself a style which no one could say was distinctively of the nineteenth century. In literature, at all events, the end always justifies the means; and all that concerns us in reading Mr. Morris's prose romances, is whether they give us the joy of true literature.

There can surely be no two answers to this question in regard to his new romance, *The Wood beyond the World*, which seems to me in every way the most perfect of all these Morrisian romances: for the story itself is the simplest and yet most full of glamour which he has given us, and the prose is simpler, stronger, and less marred with mere affectations of archaism. In it Mr. Morris seems at last to have wrought out his medium to perfection. In his other romances it was more or less in the making: here it is made.

The Wood beyond the World, need I say, is but another name for that 'Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon' whose 'wizard twilight' is the atmosphere of every book and every line Mr. Morris has written, not excepting even his Socialistic pamphlets—which, indeed, some would say, belong, *par excellence*, to that dreamy land.

Time: 'Once upon a time'—Place: 'Fairyland.' Such are the stage directions once more of this beautiful

love-story of the 'Golden Walter' of Langton-on-Holm—a seaport in the moon—and the 'Maid' dwelling in *The Wood beyond the World*, enthralled there by the magic arts of a beautiful but cruel mistress. How 'Golden Walter' came to that wood and wooed that Maid, by what ways, devious and dangerous, is long and sweet telling, and those who would hear the story must even buy the book. Yet I cannot forbear quoting the description of the vision seen in broad daylight which first set 'Golden Walter' dreaming of that far land. Bound on a voyage from Langton-on-Holm, he was idly leaning over his vessel's side awaiting her departure, and listlessly eyeing all the busy seaport life about him, when his fancy was taken by a strange ship hard by, all sail set ready for departure, and presently up its gangway went this strange procession—real, and yet somehow as in a dream :

'First came a dwarf, dark-brown of hue and hideous, with long arms and ears exceeding great, and dog-teeth that stuck out like the fangs of a wild beast. He was clad in a rich coat of yellow silk, and bare in his hand a crooked bow, and was girt with a broad sax.

'After him came a maiden, young by seeming, of scarce twenty summers ; fair of face as a flower ; grey-eyed, brown-haired, with lips full and red, slim and gentle of body. Simple was her array, of a short and straight green gown, so that on her right ankle was clear to see an iron ring.

'Last of the three was a lady, tall and stately, so radiant of visage and glorious of raiment that it were hard to say what like she was ; for scarce might the eye gaze steady upon her exceeding beauty ; yet must every son of Adam who found himself anigh her lift up his eyes again after he had dropped them, and look again on her, and yet again and yet again.'

The vision of this strange three came upon 'Golden Walter' three times, suddenly, unaccountably ; and then

on his return voyage, his vessel being driven out of its course, he came to a strange land, where he was to meet the realities of these shadows in *The Wood Beyond the World.* And then follows, perhaps, the loveliest love-story that has been written in English since Mr. Meredith wrote those wonderful chapters in *Richard Feverel*; for though in truth 'Golden Walter' and his 'Maid' are more read in the ways of love than Richard and Lucy, they are yet as boy and girl in their exquisitely frank and yet passionately pure love-making. Man and woman as they are, there is a freshness, a coyness, about their 'love-speech' that recalls the loves of Daphnis and Chloe, of which the quaint English and the pastoral setting of the story also remind one. One thinks particularly of the young Greek lovers as Walter and the Maid flee from the Golden House together, and, journeying through the waste, feed each other on wild berries, bathe in the springs, and sleep out in the woods. Quaint little touches of that shy humour, the sharing of which together is one of the sweetest intimacies of lovers, complete the resemblance to the old Greek romance. Here is a little glimpse of bath and breakfast in their Paradise of the Wilderness:

'By then were they come down to the stream-side, which ran fair in pools and stickles amidst rocks and sandy banks. She said: "There behind the great grey rock is my bath, friend; and there is thine; and lo! the uprising of the sun!"

'So she went her ways to the said rock, and he bathed him, and washed the night off him, and by then he was clad again she came back fresh and sweet from the water, and with her lap full of cherries from a wilding which overhung her bath. So they sat down together on the green grass above the sand, and ate the breakfast of the wilderness: and Walter was full of content

as he watched her, and beheld her sweetness and her loveliness; yet were they, either of them, somewhat shy and shame-faced each with the other; so that he did but kiss her hands once and again, and though she shrank not from him, yet had she no boldness to cast herself into his arms.'

Here one feels that rare quality which has always characterised the love-making in Mr. Morris's books, that pure sensuousness which only comes of honest, innocent passion, that peculiar wild-wood sweetness which is hived only in the hearts of strong men and women. Passion has seldom been more outspoken than in this *Wood Beyond the World*, but being true passion it brings with it its own purity. But here I must stop, much as I long to buttonhole the reader with that even lovelier scene where Walter and the Maid meet by the well for the first time, and he for the first time calls her 'my love, and my dear, and my darling,' and she takes him for 'my love, and my darling, and my speech-friend.' 'Wardour-Street English' or not, there is certainly no prettier English to make love in.

Henry Harland: **'Grey Roses.'**

'YES, the conception was a rose, but the achievement is a rose grown grey.' Parashkine is a writer whose name I meet for the first time as responsible for this beautiful sentence, which Mr. Henry Harland inscribes over the portals of his beautiful book of *Grey Roses*. What a perfect image of the aspiration and the achievement of the artist, an achievement which has often somewhat too crudely been described as mere disappointment!

That it certainly is not, though the artist's sense of his achievement is no doubt something short of satisfaction. 'A rose grown grey' just expresses the elusive *nuance* of his feeling between regret for what of his first dream has escaped him and grateful joy in what remains. In everything Mr. Harland writes one feels the almost torturing fastidiousness of the artistic temperament in its most sensitive development; yet not, as with his master, Mr. Henry James, from any surface marks of strain upon his work. His art is concealed beneath a simplicity of style and impression—which one knows to be art, but the secret of which it is impossible to discover. For any one interested in literary methods this characteristic of Mr. Harland's stories—for the moment putting aside their interest as stories, and their various qualities of romance and fancy and wit—will give a peculiar zest to the reading of them.

Sir Walter Besant once, writing a sort of 'How to Be a Novelist in Ten Lessons,' very properly advised students of the art of fiction to take certain acknowledged masterpieces and study them over and over again from every point of view, trying, if possible, to discover their imaginative germ and to trace its developments, and watching carefully how this and that effect had come to be produced. Such students of the short story could hardly find better models than some of Mr. Harland's stories—though it will puzzle them to dissect such a story as *Castles near Spain*, not to speak of the barbarity of thus vivisecting such a perfect living thing. However, *Lycidas* has become a grammatical drill-yard for youth, and Mr. Harland must not com-

plain if some day unhappy British boys are asked to point out the various devices of invention, fancy, and method of relation by which the interest of a story of virtually but one incident is cunningly kept fresh and positively exciting from first to last. One reads it again and again just for delight in the skill and charm of the telling, and by that token one ventures to consider it as being what a short story seldom is, namely, literature. At all events it is a lovely idyll, in which young passion and a quaint humour are blended into a rare harmony. It is first love come home again, after having seen the world a bit, with a watchful smile at the corner of its mouth for its own absurdities—but still first love.

This atmosphere of old romance pervades Mr. Harland's volume, particularly his charming studies of the Latin Quarter. Whether or not Murger's *vie de Bohème* survives in student Paris, it is certainly entertaining to make believe that it does. Does the old devil-may-care, spirited, romantic life still go on there? Do the students gather in knots at particular cafés, and are they really so witty and fantastical? Is there still that beautiful old spirit of impassioned *camaraderie* amongst them? And is the *étudiante* a bona-fide successor of the *grisette* of romance? These are heartfelt matters, to which Mr. Harland gives us the comforting answers of his delightful stories. It matters little whether or not the answers are true. It is not as if one were young enough to go and live that wild and witty life, supposing it still existent; and is not anything we may not actually live as real in art as—nay, sometimes more real than—in so-called 'reality'?

Sappho: Wharton's Text and Translations.

DR. WHARTON'S *Sappho* needs no new recommendation. Its first and second editions already make sweet the best-loved corner of one's bookshelves. Venus, it will be remembered, offered as a reward to the capturer of Psyche seven kisses, one of which should be 'of the inmost honey of her throat.' There are books to which this phrase might be applied, sweet, luxurious, euphuistic, passionate books, stored with words 'sweeter than wild honey dripping down'—Catullus, Apuleius, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Aucassin and Nicolete*, Keats, *Marius*, *Richard Feverel*, *The Earthly Paradise*, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, and some others. Among these long has stood Dr. Wharton's *Sappho*, the exquisite little box wherein he has lovingly gathered all that remains of the 'sweets compacted' by the passionate singer of Lesbos, the singer a single petal of whose rose is more than the whole rose-garden of later women-singers. Dr. Wharton surely indicates the secret of the imperishable virtue of these for the most part tiny fragments when he quotes that rapturous fragment of Sophocles: 'O gods, what love, what yearning, contributed to this!' Tremendous indeed must have been the passion which is able still to vibrate through such mere 'fractions and fragments of the old divine' as make the 'complete poetical works' of Sappho mere chippings from the great marbles long since buried and lost—perhaps not, Dr. Wharton thinks, beyond recovery. We are mighty clever young men and women, as Stevenson used to say, but it would try us sorely to put the 'pathos of

eternity' in some twenty words as Sappho puts it in these: 'The moon has set, and the Pleiades; it is midnight, the time is going by, and I sleep alone'—or in the famous cry, 'I loved thee, Atthis, long ago.' Perhaps the value of such things is rather human than poetical, the value of a memorial to the unchanging language of the heart, the value, for example, that a spoken utterance of 600 B.C. would have for us if preserved in the phonograph. Reality 600 B.C. has somehow a pathos which Reality A.D. 1895 somehow lacks; perhaps the pathos comes of the correspondence between the two realities. Perhaps, too, the cynical suggestion of a friend of mine that Sappho owes her reputation to her fragmentariness is not far from the truth. Her shorter fragments are certainly the more poignant, and we know from daily experience how much more expressive and convincing is a short cry of pain or of passion than expansions in the form of invalid confidences or divorce-court confessions.

Dollie Radford: 'Songs and other Verses.'

MRS. RADFORD resembles Sappho in that she is a woman and a poet of the simple emotions. Her verses, too, are full of passion, but it is the passion of love that is at peace, at home day by day with its loved one. Mrs. Radford's muse is married, with three charming children, and the household cares inevitably resulting. She sings in the intervals of cooking and darning or

maybe while she is cooking and darning. If she cooks and darns as well as she sings, it is well. We all know her sweet bird note. There could be no sweeter example of it than this beautiful little lyric, which she appropriately places at the front of her volume:

'I could not through the burning day
In hope prevail,
Beside my task I could not stay,
If love should fail.

Nor underneath the evening sky,
When labours cease,
Fold both my tired hands and lie
At last in peace.

Ah, what to me in death or life
Could then avail!
I dare not ask for rest or strife
If love should fail.'

Francis Thompson: '**Sister-Songs.**'

MR. FRANCIS THOMPSON tells us in a preface—in which he also makes graceful acknowledgment of indebtedness to Mr. Coventry Patmore—'a poet rich enough to lend to the poor'—that his new *Sister-Songs* were written at about the same date as *The Hound of Heaven*. We have not, then, to expect any further development of his style or any modification of its eccentricities. His Latinisms are as untamed as ever, his imagery as fantastic—and indeed, were it otherwise, surely he would not be Francis Thompson, but some other. Critics are continually asking a writer to be somebody else than himself, but

happily Mr. Thompson seems to be one of those poets who goes his own way, oblivious of the cackle of Grub Street. There is a fine passage in these new poems which shows that he is not unaware of the difficulties of his poetical method, and how they must necessarily cut him off from any widely general appreciation. He compares his poem (for these *Sister-Songs* are really one long poem in two parts) to a great Gothic palace,

> 'A palace of the Occident,
> Up-thrusting, toppling maze on maze,
> Its mounded blaze, . . .'

and he sighs to think how few will be able to enter it.

> 'So few therein to enter shall prevail!
> Scarce fewer could win way, if their desire
> A dragon baulked, with involuted spire,
> And writhen snout spattered with yeasty fire.
> For at the elfin portal hangs a horn
> Which none can wind aright
> Save the appointed knight
> Whose lids the fay-wings brushed when he was born.'

Mr. Thompson continues the image with truly Gothic fantasy, and he could not have conceived a better to describe the splendour, the wizardry, the grotesquerie, one might almost say the diablerie, and certainly the inaccessibility of his poetry. For many Mr. Thompson's wild euphuism, his abandonment to the fine frenzy, careless of the trim laws of poetical 'restraint,' his ecstatic mysticism, must make his poetry a sealed book, though 'the appointed knight' will love it for these very characteristics, and will trust that Mr. Thompson will never abate a jot of his humour to please any critic whatsoever. Extravagance is of the essence of his poetry, and the blemishes

of his style are the inevitable defects of its great and fascinating merits. Proportion in the ordinary sense is a quality foreign to Mr. Thompson's muse. It is not the harmonious, regular-featured, classically proportioned whole which one expects from him; but the dazzling line, the purple passage—lines and passages such as:

'. . . how it makes the sudden lilies push
Between the loosening fibres of the heart. . . .'

'Who weep, as weep the maidens of the mist,
Clinging the necks of the unheeding hills. . . .'

'Thou whose young sex is yet but in thy soul;—
As hoarded in the vine
Hang the gold skins of undelirious wine. . . .'

'And, though he cherisheth
The babe most strangely born from out her death,
Some tender trick of her it hath, maybe,—
It is not she! . . .'

'In all I work, my hand includeth thine;
Thou rushest down in every stream
Whose passion frets my spirit's deepening gorge;
Unhood'st mine eyas-heart, and fliest my dream;
Thou swing'st the hammers of my forge;
As the innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.'

Passion in its ideal sense has seldom found such an ecstatic, such a magnificently prodigal expression. For the love which Mr. Thompson sings is that love which never finds, nor can hope to find, 'its earthly close.' It is the poet's love of love in the abstract, revealed to him symbolically in the tender youth of two little girls, and taking the form of a splendid fantastic gallantry of the spirit. No other part has the poet in their lives but that

of their poet—singer of strange songs they are as yet too young even to understand. Yet the poet, celebrating one of the sisters, dreams of a day when

> 'One shall dip his hand to drink
> In that still water of thy soul . . .
> The destined paramount of thy universe,
> Who has no worlds to sigh for, ruling thee.'

In that hour, he continues,

> 'One grace alone I seek.
> Oh! may this treasure-galleon of my verse,
> Fraught with its golden passion, oared with cadent thyme,
> Set with a towering press of fantasies,
> Drop safely down the time,
> Leaving mine isléd self behind it far
> Soon to be sunken in the abysm of seas
> (As down the years the splendour voyages
> From some long ruined and night-submergéd star),
> And in thy subject sovereign's havening heart
> Anchor the freightage of its virgin ore;
> Adding its wasteful more
> To his own overflowing treasury.
> So through his river mine shall reach thy sea,
> Bearing its confluent part;
> In his pulse mine shall thrill;
> And the quick heart shall quicken from the heart that 's still.'

Mr. Thompson expresses the same thought in this lovely lyric, which literally sings itself:

> 'Now pass your ways, fair bird, and pass your ways,
> If you will;
> I have you through the days!
> And flit or hold you still,
> And perch you where you list
> On that wrist,—
> You are mine through the times

I have caught you fast for ever in a tangle of sweet rhymes.
And in your young maiden morn,
You may scorn,
But you must be
Bound and sociate to me;
With this thread from out the tomb my dead hand shall tether thee!'

William Platt: 'Women, Love, and Life.'

MR. WILLIAM PLATT'S curious little book has, I understand on good authority, been rejected by no fewer than four—printers! Printers, mark, not merely publishers. We are often told of great books that have gone the round of the publishers in vain, till some publisher has sufficient brains and courage—to make his fortune out of them. If rejection be any criterion of greatness—and to be despised and rejected has long been a sacred mark, not merely of greatness but of divinity—how great must be the book which is not only rejected by all the publishers—for Mr. Charles Hirsch, whose charming little French book-shop in Coventry Street is a sort of Zoar in our Puritanic Egypt, is rather a connoisseur of *belles-lettres* than a publisher—but also by four printers! All honour to the noble fifth! He has the blessing of his author, for, says the latter, 'Courage is happiness! there is no happiness but courage!'

A book which the printers rejected must evidently have striking characteristics for good or ill. It cannot be merely a stupid book—because it is obvious that

no publisher or printer rejects a book on the ground of its stupidity. You may be too clever, but you cannot be too stupid, to get published. Now Mr. Platt, as one guessed, is by no means stupid. He is, to my thinking, occasionally absurd, and perhaps a little mad. He runs amuck rather blindly, even of those who would be prepared to welcome him. Employing the literary medium, and evidently a student of great masters, he is yet paradoxical enough to treat his medium with disrespect, apparently not having mastered the truth that the more inspired the message the more perfect should be the instrument of its expression. But this is a common mistake of prophets, who have only to get into a temper with the world to break all the literary commandments—commandments by no means dictated by small self-constituted critics of the day, but by the eternal fitness of art. Yet, all this said, Mr. Platt's *Women, Love, and Life* remains a remarkable book. It has that central electrical vitality which makes surface blemishes, however tiresome, of no permanent importance. It is alive, and we can forgive a great deal to a book that is alive, for, as our author finely says in a dedication 'to all artists':

> 'That which has lived shall surely live for ever,
> Only that dies that was for ever dead!'

Of all books that are books we feel that they are still more men. 'Camerado, this is no book, who touches this touches a man,' said Whitman of his *Leaves of Grass*, and there is considerable resemblance between *The Leaves of Grass* and *Women, Love, and Life*. Mr.

Platt has evidently been an ardent disciple of Whitman. Whitman, too, it will be remembered, was rejected of the printers, setting up his book with his own hands —and for the same reason: because, as he said, he would celebrate that which he was determined to make illustrious, even if he stood sole among men—namely, the physical holiness of man, and the mystical beauty of sex.

The form of his book, a *mélange* of scattered notes on and sketches of human life, in verse and prose, yet possessing a certain unity of earnest ethical intention, evidently owes something to *The Leaves of Grass*, though Mr. Platt intersperses among his prose blank verse such as Whitman could hardly have written — blank verse evidently formed upon a study of his other great master, John Ford, whose choice of grimly morbid themes Mr. Platt also follows in the course of his volume. A poem entitled 'The Child of Love and Death,' in some respects Mr. Platt's finest thing, deals with just such a horrible subject as Ford's charnel-house imagination would have delighted in. For that poem alone Mr. Platt's book cannot fail to be anathema with many intelligent and worthy persons, who, in their disgust at the subject, will miss the wonderful way in which Mr. Platt is able so to dignify it, so to lift it up into the region of high poetry, that by the time one reaches the end the horrible *motif* is forgotten, transfigured by the simple-minded sincerity of the poet. To the pure all things are pure. I cannot remember reading a book which more appropriately might have borne that motto. Perhaps Mr. Platt has too little sense of

humour to be impure. Mr. Coventry Patmore once made the very suggestive comment upon the erotic verses of a certain young poet that he lived 'too much on the capital rather than on the interest of passion.' In his desire to be sincere, Mr. Platt is sometimes too crudely literal, but no one whose opinion counts can ever say that he is impure. 'Is not the world too base for huge naked masterpieces?' he asks in one of his many courageous savage phrases. No doubt it is; and it is to be feared that Mr. Platt, in his frank, manly, and pure treatment of sex—the main theme of his book—will find few to understand him. But, of course, he is prepared for that. His perfectly *ferocious* introduction, one of the fiercest bits of writing I remember, makes it quite clear what he thinks of the average bourgeois reader. 'Good friend,' he hospitably begins, 'I have written a book; buy it—and condemn it—for the praise of fools is no commendation.' 'Something I have sought to write,' he continues, 'that should be ample-breasted, full-blooded, hot with life—something that should be the deepest pulse of my soul. . . . Some of it you will find unintelligible—for unintelligible verse and prose has been written as long as fools did the reading of it—the rest of it you will sum up ignorantly and inefficiently, not knowing that a stronger pulse beats in these pages than ever did in your heart—nay, not on your wedding night did such a pulse beat in you, oh, general reader!' From this general reader he proceeds to particular readers who will condemn his book—to the prurient-minded Pharisee, whose 'thoughts of one minute if materialised,' he is told in quite Swiftian

hyperbole, 'would manure an acre of ground'!—to the libertine, 'thinking yourself a man because you are most certainly an animal.' 'My book will shock you,' says Mr. Platt, with fine irony, 'for so long you have never been shocked by vice, that it is time you were shocked by virtue.' In answer to the imagined question—why write for such unworthy readers? the Introduction ends with this strikingly beautiful and forcible image:

'There was a rose saw a cattle-train coming along (Stephenson, forgive me that I compare the vulgar world to anything so puissant as a train!)—a rose saw a cattle-train coming along, a blind, rolling, unstoppable force that threw the air and all aside as it came, and left in its wake the stink of smoke and the greater stench of the pent-up beasts; and the rose laid its heart across the rail—not to stop the train, nor to think that its faint sweet single odour were enough to efface the manifold smell of the horror; but because it knew that, utterly lost though its efforts were, it had no choice but to exhaust the sweetness of its tear-dewed core, in the loudest protest its heart could yield, against the foulness it could not help but grieve at.'

It is evident that Mr. Platt thinks no little of himself; and if any doubt on that matter should remain after this Introduction, there is an Epilogue which cannot but set it at rest. 'Look!' it quaintly runs:

'Look!
I have writ a rich book—
Verse with the spring of the lion,
Prose with sinews of steel!

So!
Great is the show!
As I think! as I feel—
Raptured and ringing and real!'

'Mad as a hatter!' you may say; 'Idiotic egotism,' or 'Absurd,' will be your kindest comment; yet Mr. Platt is quite right. He *has* 'writ a rich book,' and I like him none the less for saying so, though it would have been more usual to wait for others to say it. But no doubt he would have had a long wait.

With the exception of the poem I have referred to, I don't quite agree with him about his verse. He is far from being a master of the medium, and he can sometimes be exasperatingly amateurish in his rhymes and metres. Among his best verse are his ironical dedications 'To Mrs. Grundy' and 'The Spirit of Bowdler,' particularly the latter:

> 'Hail! mighty Bowdler! sapient divine
> Who puttest water in our artists' wine,
> Lest it intoxicate! . . .
> E'en Shakspere's self in thy hard toils doth writhe
> While, parson-like, thou dost demand thy tithe!
> No Art so great that it is fit to scan
> Till seen by thee, great blush-removing man!
> Then on my work may thy wise rule prevail
> To make it sexless, soulless, stunted, stale!'

His prose, though at its best it merits his own eulogium, is likewise terribly unequal—marred too often by crudities, even vulgarities, of expression, and by an outspokenness which is literal without being impressive. Moreover, Mr. Platt's determination to vindicate the purity of sex at all costs runs him sometimes into sheer absurdities. Some of his examples of passionate experience could only have been conceived by a man who is something of an erotomaniac. Yet I hasten to add that Mr. Platt's erotomania is by no means sensual, but, on the contrary, is of a quite fiery purity, which occasionally

verges on the fanatical, and often on the fantastic. At his best, however, his view of love is as sane as it is noble. For him, indeed, as he finely says, 'love is grave and terribly in earnest,' and for the profanation of its sacraments by the sensual he has no scorn too bitter. He evidently believes in the old-fashioned virtues of chastity, constancy, and chivalry. For the libertine and the deserter of women he has no mercy—not though the deserter be the great poet Shelley himself. His statement of the case for Harriet Westbrook is so original and trenchant that I cannot resist quoting it:

'There was a poet named Shelley—he loved a girl named Harriet, married her—then tired of her, left her, though she still loved him. He subsequently wrote a lot of love poetry, this man who deserted the woman who loved him, whom he had once loved. Some of us like love poetry: some of us would rather that that man did not write love poetry who deserted a girl who loved him.

'Compare the after lives of the two.

'He went with another woman—was fairly faithful to her (as men go), lived on the whole a regulated life, continued in his pursuits, wrote poetry and so on, was, it must be said to his high honour, a generous man with his money, however selfish in his love.

'She—some by-way of shame she crept down, then into the grave by her own act.

'Compare these after lives—which the better? "Shelley's," says the average person—Average fool! The break-off from his old love left him unshaken to pursue his path—in the break-off of her love was the crash of her life. For she really loved, loved, loved; but he—well, he continued to write love poetry! Had he taken to harlots or drink I might have had some praise or pity for him.'

In less belligerent moods, Mr. Platt writes thus beautifully and tenderly of 'Love and Beauty':

'All things are beautiful—when love comes love sees that.

'What work does a poet love best? That which is most his

own. One thing and a second thing he has said, but some one else also; the third thing he said more fully and completely, more newly than any one; that he loves best. Who would choose a beautiful girl to love him? Many would, and they do well. But if you would be advised, choose one whose beauty is not open and obvious to the world, but has been seen by yourself by the light of a grave and growing love—whose beauty the world knows not, but you are master of—choose her, let her beauty be your sublime secret, your choicest discovery—join you with her to eternalise from it some lovely characteristic charm of hers—that may thus stay to sweeten the world through all its long eternity!'

But though Mr. Platt thus occasionally blossoms out into a rarely simple beauty of expression, the chief characteristic of his prose is its savage vigour—its 'teeth,' as he puts it. 'Shall I,' he says somewhere (glaring at his quite possibly sympathetic reader), 'take the teeth out of my prose that you may make a plaything of it?' And, talking of teeth, what could be more vivid in its way than this wonderful little picture of a rat at bay?

'There was a rat in a warehouse—six men hunted it out and killed it. The rat was shifty, alert, and brave, and made a good try for its life; it ran well and could have bitten, one knew by the gleam of its eye—but they were crafty and hedged it in with boxes, gave it no chance, and even then were half afraid of it. When it was dead they threw its body into the street—but I took it up and buried it; it had taken six men to kill it!

'One of these six men died from a disease he caught of a harlot; another died of drink, and another of eating; another died moaning in an hospital, and another died snivelling in a workhouse; the sixth died respectably at home, as an Englishman should, dividing his moments between bullying his wife and stuttering in abject fear.

'O for the sharp black eyes of that rat when it died—it took six men to kill it.'

Mr. Platt's vigour is not afraid of being brutal. The

strength of such a story as 'At the Call the Man Comes' almost turns one sick; yet how noble the motive of the stripling who learned boxing that he might chastise the bulliers of women in his East End street, and who dies from the effects of such an encounter; and how lovely is the conclusion, in spite of the painful, almost revolting, picture of the poor battered face and broken figure, over which the girl he has championed bends in the agony of a last embrace, tearing open her bodice and pressing her breast to his lips, in a wild half-distraught idea—an impulse half-maternal—that it may revive him!

Never was such a bitter, blasphemous pessimist as this William Platt, yet never a more tender heart, never a more faithful believer in Love and Beauty,—yet a believer without hope, for he sees his ideals beset on every hand by coarse and cruel materialism, and he despairs of their ever building here the Kingdom of Heaven they dream of—as, indeed, how should he not despair?

There is, I repeat, much that will repel and irritate certain readers in *Women, Love, and Life*, and, unfortunately, in such a book one is apt first to hit upon the repellent and irritating passages. But, allowing all that may be said against it, it remains one of the most striking and original books published in England for a long time; and whether we like or dislike him, or merely laugh at him, the writer is evidently an individuality, eccentric indeed, but sane enough on all the great matters, and master of an English which at its best has that spontaneous strength and beauty which comes of an inspired artistic gift, and which no mere self-conscious

'stylist' can ever attain. Mr. Platt is, it appears, a composer also. His book quaintly begins with four pages of music, and ends with a long list of his musical works.

Hubert Crackanthorpe: 'Sentimental Studies.'

SOME time ago Mr. Zangwill, in one of his uncollected poems, declared that 'sentiment is back again,' and now Mr. Hubert Crackanthorpe calls his new volume *Sentimental Studies* —so it must be true. One cannot, in passing, help wondering whether, in regard to writers that count, sentiment has ever really gone away, and, at the same time, ask, What is sentiment? Sentiment might be defined roughly as that quality in literature particularly offensive to the *Saturday Review*, though to the many millions who are not readers of the *Saturday Review* the definition will obviously convey little. Sentiment has suffered considerably from being confused with its pretended relative, sentimentality. There is really no connection between the two. Sentiment is real feeling, and sentimentality is affected feeling. Sentiment, one admits, may sometimes shed more tears than are necessary, but it always has sincere emotion at the back of it. Exaggerated as sometimes it may be, it is surely a better thing than the callous insensitiveness, often amounting to brutality, which, profaning the name of 'manliness'—of which tenderness has always been an accepted constituent—would ride roughshod over the best feelings of human nature. It is far better

to feel too much than to feel nothing, better even to pretend to feel than to affect the brutality of feeling nothing; and, indeed, there are no few matters in human life about which it has seemed to many great people impossible to feel too much. One of these matters, at all events according to lovers, is love, and that is the main theme of Mr. Crackanthorpe's *Sentimental Studies*.

Probably without knowing it, the author of *Wreckage* has always been on the side of sentiment, though I remember a certain distinguished novelist buttonholing me in the street a year or two ago to descant on Mr. Crackanthorpe as the young hope of English realism—thereby causing me to miss two trains, pleasantly enough, as the subject was Mr. Crackanthorpe. Two or three of the best of the stories in *Wreckage* might just as truly have been described as Sentimental Studies as any in the volume under review—though perhaps one does feel in the latter a more generally pervasive sense of human pity. In *Wreckage* the situations and *dramatis personæ* were presented too much as in a vacuum. Whatever you might feel, the novelist studiously refrained from committing himself, and what was good in that objective method Mr. Crackanthorpe still retains. The objectivity of his method is indeed one of its most striking characteristics, and yet while he is thus able to stand outside his characters he is at the same time able to get inside them very wonderfully, too. That, I suppose, is but to say he is a novelist, though, if so, novelists must be rarer than they seem. A striking concreteness of impression is the logical result. There is nothing misty or uncertain. Everything is drawn

with a firm touch. You feel that Mr. Crackanthorpe has seen and known what he describes, and therefore he makes you see and know it also. His sincerity towards his impressions—to use, I think, Mr. Pater's phrase—is also seen in his writing, which, too, is singularly concrete, nicely built and trowelled off, so to say, to a word. Some of Mr. Crackanthorpe's descriptions, indeed, make one hope that he will some day publish a volume of those 'Vignettes' of which he has already published a few examples in various periodicals.

For example take this description of Piccadilly in a thunderstorm :

'The hansoms whirled their yellow, gleaming eyes down west : hot, flapping gusts went and returned aimlessly : and the mirthless twitterings of the women fell abruptly on the sluggishly shuffling crowd. All the sin of the city seemed crushed to listlessness ; vacantly wistful, the figures waited by the street corners.

'Then the storm burst. Slow, ponderous drops ; a clap of the thunder's wrath ; a crinkled rim of light, unveiling a slab of sky, throbbing, sullen, and violet ; small, giggling streams of alarm, and a stampede of bunchy silhouettes. The thunder clapped again, impatient and imperious ; and the rain responded, jealously hissing. Bright stains of liquid gold struggled across the roadway ; a sound of splashing accompanied the thud of hoofs, the rumble of wheels, the clanking of chains, and the ceaseless rattle of the drops on the hurried procession of umbrellas.'

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